

Algeria opposition urges poll boycott as violence mounts

ALGIERS (AFP) — As bloodshed escalated over the weekend in Algeria, claiming more than 20 lives, two of the country's main opposition parties called for boycotts to show their rejection of next month's presidential election.

However, the two, which include the long-time ruling national Liberation Front (FLN) chose different ways to demonstrate their opposition to the poll, the first round of which takes place on November 16 and which President Liamine Zedroui is strongly tipped to win.

The Socialist Forces Front (FSF) led by Hocine Ait-Ahmad, accused the military-backed regime of wanting to "take over the votes" and called for a total boycott "using all peaceful means."

The FLN meanwhile recommended a boycott in "certain areas," while in others voters would cast blank ballots, party Secretary-General Abdul Hamid Mehri told a news conference Sunday.

Mr. Mehri said the decision to implement only a partial boycott had been taken in the light of pressures that might be applied to voters. He said the election would not take place in conditions where freedom of choice existed.

The FLN and FSF were among eight opposition parties to sign a peace proposal in Rome earlier this year, including the banned Islamic Salvation Front (FIS), all of which have condemned the poll.

They say the election is aimed at legitimising the existing regime and will only exacerbate the current crisis.

The military-backed authorities annulled general elections three and a half years ago which the extremist Islamic Salvation Front (FIS) was poised to win, unleashing a wave of violence in which at least 30,000 people have been killed.

The country's most radical Islamic fundamentalist organisation, the Armed Islamic Group (GIA), has used the forthcoming election to step up its campaign of terror.

This weekend, the violence which has wracked Algeria over the last few years continued unabated, as extremists shot dead 18 people Sunday in an attack on a bus near Laghouat in the south, according to police.

Fifteen others were injured as the fundamentalists stormed the bus in what

security forces described as one of the bloodiest attacks in the country's civil war.

Three small children and a woman were among the dead, a statement by the security forces said. Most wounded were children.

The bus, owned by the town's public transport system, was on its way from Ghisba to Anfos, near Aflou, 250 kilometres south of Algiers.

Security forces killed four members of the commando, according to the statement.

The attack carried out at 10 a.m. (0800 GMT) came as newspapers reported Sunday that two people were killed and 12 injured in two separate car bombings Saturday.

One, at Tipaza, 70 kilometres east of Algiers, aimed at a police hostel, killed two street cleaners and injured 10 other people.

The hostel was wrecked and several nearby buildings damaged.

At Dzean, near Al Tarf in the far east of Algeria, a car bomb exploded outside a police station, injuring two passers-by and damaging the building.

In a separate incident Saturday, a blast in the heart of Algiers near the central police station that officials said was caused by a gas leak, killed five people and injured 10 others, according to the Al Moudjahid and Liberte dailies on Sunday. The official toll was one dead and 11 injured.

Several newspapers cast doubt on official claims that the blast was the result of an accident and suggested it had been a bombing.

Thirty fundamentalists were killed in several operations, security services said Sunday in two separate communiqués. Twenty six fundamentalists were killed in five days, said one communiqué.

In another, security services said they had killed four members of an active cell after a shootout in Chlef.

The communiqué said weapons had been seized as well as documents detailing the activities of the group. The communiqué said it was known to have carried out 18 killings and several arson and sabotage attacks.

The latest deaths bring to 201 the number of fundamentalists killed over the last month, according to official communiqués. The number of police killed has not been made public.



QUAKE IN TURKEY: Turkish Prime Minister Tansu Ciller on Monday comforts a villager watching rescue teams at work in the rubble of buildings that collapsed in an earthquake that hit the Turkish village of Dinar late Sunday (see story on page one) (AFP photo)

Craddling daughter, contented Arafat recalls 'longest revolution'

By Donna Abu Nasr
The Associated Press

RELAXING HIGH above the Atlantic, Yasser Arafat was hardly recognisable.

A blue track suit replaced the usual fatigues. Gone was the headscarf that covers the Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO) chief's bald pate as he held his two-month-old daughter for the first time and warmly kissed her tiny hand.

It was a rare tender moment for the former guerrilla, whose political manipulations and revolutionary fervour made his name nearly synonymous with Palestine for almost three decades.

On the flight to Washington last week to sign the latest autonomy accord with Israel, Mr. Arafat ruminated on his years of being shunned by the United States, Israel and much of the world as a terrorist. Now, he appears to be nearing his goal of an independent Palestine.

Methodically folding paper tissues into perfect triangles as he spoke, Mr. Arafat said patience has been the key to what he



Yasser Arafat

termed "the longest revolution in the 20th century."

"You have to be meticulous and patient in everything you do," he told the Associated Press as the military plane made its bumpy descent into Andrews Air Force Base outside Washington.

People who know him stress other qualities too: a killer instinct and Machiavellian bent that have enabled Mr. Arafat to outlast rivals and survive dozens of assassina-

tion attempts.

As long-time head of the PLO, Mr. Arafat's modus operandi has been to centralise power and ensure members of his immediate circle are not tempted to band together against him.

But last Wednesday's flight to Washington, in which he was reunited with his family, provided Mr. Arafat with a brief chance to relax. He seemed ill-at-ease in repose.

After shaking hands with everyone aboard the plane provided by Morocco's King Hassan, he changed out of his revolutionary garb and settled on a blue blanket draped over three seats.

Moments later, an aide brought over his daughter Zahwa, who he had seen only once before — for 15 minutes after her July 24 birth in Paris.

There was no expression on Mr. Arafat's face as he studied the child — whom his wife, Soha, proudly describes as similar to Mr. Arafat in both looks and fiery spirit.

Then, in a rare display of affection, Mr. Arafat took hold of her tiny hand and kissed it.

Beirut judge to question hardline Palestinian leader

BEIRUT (R) — Lebanese authorities will question a Palestinian guerrilla chief accused of threatening to kill a government minister who he said described Palestinians as "human garbage," judicial sources said on Monday.

They said investigating Judge Abdullah Bitar issued a warrant ordering Colonel Munir Al Maqdash, head of a small Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO) splinter faction opposed to the PLO-Israeli peace deal, to appear before him on Wednesday for questioning.

The official National News Agency (NNA) said on Saturday a Beirut prosecutor charged Col. Maqdash with threatening to kill Tourism Minister Nicholas Fattoush and slandering Interior Minister Michel A. Murr.

During a news conference at 'Ain Al Hilweh refugee camp in South Lebanon last Thursday Col. Maqdash told reporters: "We will not allow to live for 24 hours the one who calls our Palestinian people garbage."

But on Monday, Col. Maqdash said he had been misquoted.

"What I meant by my words is not a threat to one of the ministers to kill him as was attributed to me, but if the Palestinian people are garbage like the tourism minister said then he would have died himself from this garbage within 24 hours," Col. Maqdash said in a statement published by Beirut dailies.

Earlier, several Lebanese newspapers quoted Mr. Fattoush as calling Palestinians "human garbage," Mr. Fattoush denied the reports.

Col. Maqdash was also accused of slandering Mr. Murr by saying he was a "traitor" like Libyan leader Muammar Qadhafi who has threatened to deport thousands of Palestinians from Libya.

Mr. Murr recently slapped entry restrictions on Palestinians with Lebanese travel documents and closed the sea transport route with Libya to prevent expelled Palestinians entering Lebanon.

Officials fail to convince UAE family to abandon call for maid's execution

ABU DHABI (R) — Officials have tried but failed to persuade the family of the man killed by Filipina maid Sarah Balabagan to drop their demand for her execution in exchange for blood money, sources close to the family said on Monday.

The United Arab Emirates (UAE) officials recently approached the family of Almas Mohammad Al Baloushi at their home in the oasis town of Al 'Ain and made the offer, the sources told Reuters.

"The officials asked them about blood money and offered to pay it," one source, who asked to remain anonymous, said.

Baloushi's son Faraj, who represents the family in court, on Monday reiterated they would never back down on their demand for the death sentence to be carried out.

"Why should we ever accept blood money instead of the death sentence? She confessed to the killing and she should be executed," he said.

The blood money offer was the first sign that the government was seeking a reconciliation formula with the family in accordance with Islamic law.

An Islamic court in Al 'Ain on Sept. 16 sentenced Ms. Balabagan to death for the premeditated murder of Baloushi, her UAE employer.

It rejected her claim that she stabbed him 34 times in self-defence after wrestling his knife away during a rape. Baloushi's family had repeatedly demanded the death sentence throughout Ms. Balabagan's trial, saying she stabbed him while he was praying.

They still have the option of accepting blood money instead of the death sentence, according to Islamic law.

UAE President Sheikh Zayed Ben Sultan Al Nahayan ordered a retrial after the same Al 'Ain court convicted Ms. Balabagan of manslaughter and sentenced her to seven years imprisonment. It also concluded she had been raped and awarded her compensation.

Both sides had appealed against the first court's verdict.

The UAE federal supreme court must endorse a death sentence and Sheikh Zayed must approve any execution.

NEWS IN BRIEF

Vanunu goes on hunger strike

TEL AVIV (AFP) — Jailed nuclear technician Mordechai Vanunu who revealed secrets on Israel's atomic arsenal is on hunger strike against being held in solitary confinement, his support committee announced Monday. "It's been almost two years that Mordechai Vanunu is asking to be held in more humane conditions. So he started a hunger strike on Sunday," said committee member Guidone Spiro. Mr. Vanunu, held in isolation since 1986, wants the right to receive visitors at Ashkelon prison in southern Israel, to be able to take his daily walk with other prisoners and for his mail not to be censored. Mr. Spiro said dozens of peace activists demonstrated on Saturday in front of Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin's house to demand the release of 40-year-old Vanunu. The supreme court is considering his appeal to be set free. He was kidnapped in Rome on Sept. 30, 1986, by agents of the Israeli secret service Mossad for revealing secrets on the state's nuclear arsenal to the British newspaper. The Sunday Times. Mr. Vanunu is serving an 18-year sentence for espionage and high treason.

Iran arrests 32 for deadly stoning attacks

NICOSIA (AP) — Iranian authorities have arrested 32 people for deadly stone-throwing attacks on trains around Tehran's main railroad station, the Islamic republic's state-run television network reported. It quoted the state-owned rail network's public relations department as saying that railroad authorities will deal severely with the stone-throwers rounded up over the last two days. It said that a young man who had caused the death of a 10-year-old girl by throwing stones at trains on the line from Tehran to the northwestern city of Tabriz had been identified and arrested.

Palestinian guerrilla killed in Lebanon

MARJAYOUN (R) — A Palestinian faction said on Monday one of its guerrillas was killed in a clash on Sunday with Israeli forces in South Lebanon. The Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine-General Command said in a statement one of its fighters was killed when Israeli forces in Arnoun in Israel's South Lebanon occupation zone fired artillery shells at the guerrillas outside the strip. The Damascus-based group said the Israeli shelling was prompted by an attack by its fighters on an Israeli patrol using anti-tank rockets and machineguns, which killed or wounded a number of soldiers.



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14:00 Captain Planet
14:30 M.A.N.T.I.S.
15:00 Mountain Men
16:00 Families
17:00 Children's Programme — Les Mondes Enluminés
17:30 Montagne
18:00 News in French
19:15 Fast Pas Revue
19:30 News Headlines
19:35 You Bet Your Life
20:00 The Secrets of Treasure Island
20:30 The Bold and the Beautiful
21:15 Drama — True Blue
22:00 News in English
22:25 Trade Winds (Part III)
23:30 Feature: "Operation War Zone"
23:59 Grace Under Fire
00:30 Varieties

PRAYER TIMES

04:09 Fajr
05:26 (Sunrise) Dhuhr
11:25 Asr
14:47 Maghrib
18:41 Isha

CHURCHES

St. Mary of Nazareth Church
Switzerland. Tel. 810740

Assemblies of God Church. Tel. 632785.

St. Joseph Church Tel. 624590.
Church of the Annunciation Tel. 637440.
De la Salle Church Tel. 661757
Terzian Church Tel. 622366
Church of the Annunciation Tel. 623541
Anglican Church Tel. 628226.
Armenian Catholic Church Tel. 771331.
Armenian Orthodox Church Tel. 772561.
St. Ephraim Church Tel. 771751.
Armenian International Church Tel. 625226.
Evangelical Lutheran Church Tel. 824328.
German-speaking Evangelical Congregation Tel. 684195.
The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints Tel. 654932.
Church of Nazareth Tel. 675691.
The Evangelical Local Church in Amman Tel. 811295.

WEATHER

Bulletin supplied by the Department of Meteorology.
Cold weather conditions are expected to prevail with temperatures dropping further. Skies will be cloudy to partly cloudy and winds westerly active with a chance of showers particularly in the north and central parts of the Kingdom. In Aqaba, skies will be partly cloudy, winds southerly active, and seas rough.

JORDAN TIMES DAILY GUIDE AND CALENDAR

Min./Max. temp.

Amman 13/22
Aqaba 20/29
Dahab 11/25
Jordan Valley 18/28

Yesterday's high temperatures:
Amman 26, Aqaba 35. Humidity readings: Amman 57 per cent, Aqaba 35 per cent.

USEFUL TELEPHONE NUMBERS NIGHT DUTY

AMMAN:
Dr. Mukhlis Halasah 819230
Dr. Fayed Dahbas 759155
Dr. Arafat Al Ashhab 612507
Dr. Munther Al Oraini 884236
Ferdows pharmacy 778336
Al Asma pharmacy 637055
Nairookh pharmacy 623672
Al Salam pharmacy 626730
Yacoub pharmacy 644945
Shwehri pharmacy 637660
Nairookh pharmacy 623672
Najib pharmacy 847632

IRBID:
Dr. Fayed Al Qadi 248743
Alquds pharmacy (-)

ZARQA:
Dr. Fahed Jaber 945449

Khalifeh pharmacy 985417

Food Control Centre 637111
Civil Defence Department 661111
Civil Defence Department 661111
Rescue 630341
Civil Defence Emergency 199
Rescue Police 192, 621111, 637777
Fire Brigade 617101
Blood Bank 775121
Highway Police 843402
Traffic Police 896390
Public Security Department 632311
Hotel Complaints 661176
Price Complaints 661176
Water and Sewerage 897467
Complaints 787111
Telephone Information (directory assistance) 121
Overseas Calls 010230
Central Amman Telephone 623101
Abdali Telephone Repairs 661101
Jordan Television 774111
Radio Jordan 668100
Water Authority 668100
Jordan Electricity Authority 815615

EMERGENCIES

AMMAN:
Hussein Medical Centre 813813/32
Khaldi Maternity, J. Ann 644281/6
Akileh Maternity, J. Ann 644281/6
Jabal Amman Maternity 642363
Malhas, J. Amman 634140
Palestine, Shmouani 664174
Shmouani Hospital 669131
University Hospital 843845
Al-Mustashir Hospital 667279
The Islamic, Abdali 666127/7
Al-Ahli, Abdali 664166
Italian, Al-Mahajreen 777101/3
Al-Bashir, J. Ashrafieh 775111/28
Army, Marfa 891611/15
Queen Alia Hospital 686100
Anat Hospital 607155
The Arab Centre for Heart and Special Surgery 865199

ZARQA:
Zarqa Govt. Hospital (09)863323
Zarqa National Hospital (09)863323
Ibn Sina Hospital (09)863323
Al Hikma Modern Hospital (09)863323
PRINCE BASSA Hospital (09)863323
Greek Catholic Hospital (09)863323
The Al Nafes Hospital (09)863323
AQABA:
Princess Haya Hospital (09)314111

FOR THE TRAVELLER

HOSPITALS

AMMAN:
Hussein Medical Centre 813813/32
Khaldi Maternity, J. Ann 644281/6
Akileh Maternity, J. Ann 644281/6
Jabal Amman Maternity 642363
Malhas, J. Amman 634140
Palestine, Shmouani 664174
Shmouani Hospital 669131
University Hospital 843845
Al-Mustashir Hospital 667279
The Islamic, Abdali 666127/7
Al-Ahli, Abdali 664166
Italian, Al-Mahajreen 777101/3
Al-Bashir, J. Ashrafieh 775111/28
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Al Hikma Modern Hospital (09)863323
PRINCE BASSA Hospital (09)863323
Greek Catholic Hospital (09)863323
The Al Nafes Hospital (09)863323
AQABA:
Princess Haya Hospital (09)314111

FOR THE TRAVELLER

QUEEN ALIA INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT

This information is supplied by Royal Jordanian (RJ) information department at the Queen Alia International Airport Tel. (08)53200-5, where it should always be verified.

ARRIVALS Royal Jordanian (RJ) Flights (Terminal 1)

03:10 Jakarta, Kuala Lumpur (RJ)
07:00 Damascus (RJ)
07:45 Abu Dhabi (RJ)
09:15 Agaba (RJ)
09:35 Muscat, Dubai (RJ)
09:35 Beirut (RJ)
09:50 Doha, Bahrain (RJ)
16:30 London (RJ)
16:05 Cairo (RJ)
16:40 Frankfurt (RJ)
17:25 Chicago, Amsterdam (RJ)

Other Flights (Terminal 2)

03:20 Vienna (OS)
06:45 Cairo (MS)
13:00 Munich (YI)
13:00 Riyadh (SV)
13:20 Rome (AZ)
17:45 Khartoum (SD)
18:15 Dubai (EK)

DEPARTURES Royal Jordanian (RJ) Flights (Terminal 1)

05:40 Aden (OY)
20:10 Beirut (ME)
22:40 Amsterdam (KL)
23:55 Bucharest (RO)

Other Flights (Terminal 2)

05:40 Agaba (RJ)
07:00 Damascus (RJ)
08:40 New York (RJ)
11:10 Vienna, Frankfurt (RJ)
11:15 Montreal, Toronto (RJ)
11:45 Geneva, Brussels (RJ)
12:15 Cairo (RJ)
13:05 London (RJ)
13:05 Madrid (RJ)
20:05 Lamaca (RJ)
20:20 Jeddah (RJ)
21:20 Damascus (RJ)
21:20 Abu Dhabi, Dubai (RJ)
21:30 Kuala Lumpur, Singapore (RJ)

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Cabbage 200/150
Carrot 440/340
Cauliflower 320/220
Cucumbers (large) 200/130
Cucumbers (small) 300/230
Eggplant 280/180
Garlic 700/500
Grapes 720/500
Guava 600/500
Lemon 270/200
Marrow (large) 180/100
Marrow (small) 340/200
Mushrooms 200/120
Okra 300/200
Onion (dry) 230/180
Orange 500/400
Pepper (hot) 240/180
Pepper (sweet) 280/160
Pomegranate 360/260
Potato 290/200
Spinach 300/200
String Beans 850/600
Tomato 1100/800

Colombo mounts big offensive against rebels

COLOMBO (AFP) — Heavy hand-to-hand battles raged in northern Sri Lanka Monday as the military launched a major offensive against Tamil rebels, losing at least 12 soldiers in the initial fighting, defence officials said.

Thousands of soldiers from the Palaly military complex in the Jaffna peninsula advanced towards positions of the separatist Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE), who were providing stiff resistance, said military spokesman Sarath Munasinghe.

Defence sources said at least 12 soldiers were killed and about 50 to 60 troops

wounded. Most of the army casualties were caused by mortar bombs fired by the LTTE, defence sources said, adding the military offensive was aimed at taking out the rebel gun positions, which had been used in recent weeks to attack the airfield at Palaly.

The rebels' clandestine radio, the Voice of Tigers, said six civilians were killed and 53 wounded in the army action but this could not be independently confirmed. It said no rebels had been killed.

The offensive began Sunday and troops had reached Atchchuvelli to the southeast of Palaly.

"Troops are now dominating in Atchchuvelli which they re-took from the terrorists. There are lot of terrorist casualties and we are in the process of taking stock now," a defence source said.

The LTTE said that 5,000 ground troops were involved in the army's advance and claimed that thousands of civilians were fleeing the battle zone and seeking refuge in the western part of the peninsula.

"Aerial and artillery bombardments are being extensively used to pave the way for the ground troops to advance... LTTE fighters are giving stiff resistance in order to halt the military

advance," the LTTE said in a separate statement issued from its London office Monday.

An offensive in Jaffna had been expected before the onset of monsoon rains which make prolonged fighting more difficult for both sides.

Heavy rains prevent the use of main battle tanks on muddy terrain but also make the crude locally-made anti-personnel mines ineffective when water gets into the battery operated triggering devices.

The Voice of Tigers said the army had some 35,000 soldiers stationed inside the sprawling Palaly military

complex to mount an even bigger offensive before the end of the year.

The Tiger remarks came as Deputy Defence Minister Anuruddha Ratwatte told a meeting with the Buddhist clergy Sunday that the war with the Tamil Tigers would be fought to a finish within three months.

The Tamil Tigers are leading a protracted campaign for an independent homeland for the island's Tamil minority concentrated in the northern and eastern regions. More than 50,000 people have died in the 23-year-old conflict.

Hundreds of Kashmir rebels die in factional fighting

SRINAGAR, India (AFP) — Hundreds of Muslim guerrillas have died in Kashmir in internecine clashes, and the scores of heavily armed rebel groups continue to battle it out for supremacy.

Heavily-armed guerrilla groups frequently train their guns on each other, and virtually every one of the dozens of militant groups has suffered splits since a Muslim insurgency erupted in the northern Indian state in 1989.

It is a development which immensely pleases the Indian authorities, who have deployed tens of thousands of army and paramilitary troops to fight militants. New Delhi claims are armed and trained by neighbouring Pakistan.

Kashmir's leading pro-independence group, the Jammu and Kashmir Liberation Front (JKLF), broke up last month after its Srinagar-based President

Yasin Malik and Pakistan-based Chairman Amanullah Khan expelled each other.

The military commanders of the rival JKLF factions immediately denounced each other as Indian agents.

The emergence of renegade militant leader Nuka Paray, who is dubbed an Indian stooge by other Muslim separatist groups, as a force to reckon with in recent months has further complicated the situation in Kashmir.

"All militant outfits are concerned about the present situation," said Ali Shah Geelani, chairman of the Jamiat-E-Islami, whose military arm, the Hizbul Mujahadeen, is Kashmir's dominant guerrilla group.

"(The factional fighting) is a matter of concern," he said. Muslim sources blame the Hizb for most of the internecine battles, which have claimed the lives of an estimated 900 militants since 1989.

A Muslim leader said on

condition of anonymity that 207 guerrillas were killed in factional fighting in 1993, 311 in 1994 and 165 so far this year.

The Hizbul Mujahadeen and the JKLF were locked in fierce gunbattles in 1992 and 1993 in Srinagar and all over the Kashmir Valley, and the former eventually came out on top. The Hizb has also attacked almost all other groups, in particular the Muslim Mujahadeen and Ikhwan-ul-Muslimeen.

Most clashes have been sparked by ideological and personality differences. The JKLF favours independence for Kashmir, which is held by both India and Pakistan, while the Hizb and most other militant groups want Indian Kashmir to merge with Pakistan.

Jamiat's Geelani dismissed charges that the Hizb had sparked factional feuds. "The Hizb has not initiated any of the fighting," he said. "When other

groups attack it, the Hizb is compelled to retaliate."

Mr. Paray, 47, who heads the Ikhwan-ul-Muslimeen group and has his headquarters at Hajin, some 40 kilometres from Srinagar, has vowed to finish off the Hizb.

Indian officials say one reason a large number of Islamic mercenaries, mainly Afghans, were crossing into Kashmir from Pakistan was because local militants had become weak due to internecine clashes and the pressure exerted by Indian troops.

A Kashmir official said the factional fighting was nothing surprising.

"This was a natural thing to happen considering the number of (militant) groups here," said Kashmir government spokesman Kulbushan Jindiyal. "Some want to join Pakistan, some want complete independence."

"What else could one expect?"

Burmese envoy says talks with Suu Kyi not needed

BANGKOK (AFP) — The Burmese ambassador to Thailand said talks on political reforms between Burma's military government and dissident democratic leader Aung San Suu Kyi were unnecessary, a local newspaper said Monday.

The government's National Convention was formed for the purpose of drafting a new constitution and would have sole responsibility for political reform. Ambassador Tin Win told the Bangkok Post.

"As the process is going very smoothly, we don't need dialogue with anybody," he was cited as saying. Embassy officials said the interview had taken place but they could not immediately confirm what had been discussed.

The junta's first secretary, Lieutenant General Khin Nyunt, last month told U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations Madeleine Albright that talks with Ms. Suu Kyi, released from almost six years of house arrest in July, were being considered.

Gen. Khin Nyunt has accepted an invitation from the Thai embassy in Rangoon to pay an official visit to Thailand, but the trip has not yet been scheduled, Burmese embassy officials said.

The National Convention would resume deliberations on Oct. 24, the Burmese embassy said. Opposition leaders have said that those voicing alternatives to the draft constitution are suppressed both inside and outside the convention.

Qualified civilians would be eligible to serve as the next president, but the military would hold one of two vice-presidential posts even though it did not have a party, Mr. Tin Win told the Bangkok Post.

"It is not true that the president must have a military background, but must have military knowledge," because the country needed a strong government to unite 155 minority groups, the newspaper cited him as saying.

Under the draft constitution, marriage to a foreigner disqualifies a Burmese citizen from serving as president, eliminating from contention Ms. Suu Kyi, whose National League for Democracy (NLD) swept nationwide elections in 1990.

The ruling State Law and Order Restoration Council refused to recognise the results and hand over power until a new constitution ensuring a role for the military in politics was in place. Most of the NLD leadership was arrested.

Also looming as an explosive issue is debate over the U.S.-Japan security relationship amid mounting public anger over the rape last month of a young Okinawan schoolgirl, allegedly by U.S. servicemen stationed on the southern Japanese island.



Bangladesh Prime Minister Khaleda Zia (left) distributes cooked rice to a group of flood victims during an unscheduled visit to some of the flood shelters in worst-hit northern Dinajpur district (AFP photo)

Bangladesh troops deployed as floods kill more than 100

DHAKA, Bangladesh (AP) — Troops were deployed in Bangladesh to rescue millions of people trapped by floods that have killed more than 100 people in the last five days, newspapers said Monday.

At least 20 deaths were reported by Sangbad newspaper which quoted residents of the inundated villages and towns.

But the government said they could confirm only 17 deaths since Wednesday. Wide gaps between official and newspaper figures are common in Bangladesh, where the government is slow in releasing number of fatalities.

The floods in the northern districts, caused by heavy rains, have affected more than 3 million people, said Harun Al Rashid, the junior minister for disaster and relief. One-third of them were trapped in their flooded homes, unable to move to safer places, he said in an interview.

Troops in speed boats will try to ferry the hardest-hit villagers to safer places, he

said. The military was called in after Prime Minister Khaleda Zia visited the flood-affected areas, 190 kilometres north of Dhaka Sunday.

Road links between the capital, Dhaka, and at least nine worst-affected districts have been cut off because swirling flood waters washed away several high-way bridges, the Bengali-language Janakantha newspaper said.

Some parts of Gaibandha, Naogaon and Santahar districts went under up to one metre of water and many residents fled and took shelter on the highways and atop flood embankments.

Angered by slow supply of relief material, like food and medicines, about 500 people attacked and ransacked a government office in Dinajpur district Sunday, Janakantha newspaper said.

This is the third spate of floods in northern Bangladesh this year. More than 200 people were killed in the earlier floods.

Philippine storm kills 100, scores missing

SAN FERNANDO, Philippines (R) — At least 100 people were killed and 100 others missing after tropical storm Sybil battered the Philippines, swamping towns and triggering mudflows and landslides, rescuers said Monday.

Relief officials said they feared the death toll would rise once reports were received from areas cut off from the capital Manila by a breakdown in power and communications.

Hardest hit was the northern town of Cabalan in Pampanga province, where more than 50 people died after the storm ravaged it with floods and mudflows as high as six metres at the weekend, a local official said.

The dead included two members of a seven-man rescue team swamped by mud falls Sunday night while trying to help families stranded on the roofs of their houses, he said. The five other rescue team members are among the missing.

Another 18 people were crushed to death by landslides in the mountainous Ifugao province further north, rescuers said.

More than 30 others were killed elsewhere in the country, including 18 whose houses were buried in landslides in the remote southern town of Valencia on Mindanao Island.

The storm, with winds of 95 kilometres an hour near its centre, battered 30 provinces and 20 cities as it churned up the entire

length of the country, wrecking hundreds of homes and knocking out power and communications in many areas.

The storm turned Cabalan into a virtual wasteland, with most structures buried in the mudflows from nearby Mount Pinatubo volcano, Ananias Canlas, mayor of the neighbouring town of Bacolor north of Manila, told reporters after an aerial survey.

About 8,000 Cabalan residents fled to the roofs of their houses Sunday to escape the mud falls and the floods, the state-owned Philippine News Agency said.

The mudflows consist of tonnes of debris dumped on Pinatubo's slopes by its violent 1991 eruption. The deposits turn into deadly rivers of mud when loosened by rains.

About 20 typhoons and storms hit the Philippines every year, making mudflows a regular menace to communities near Pinatubo.

Sybil moved out of the country early Monday morning, heading towards the southern coast of China.

Defence Secretary Renato De Villa described the devastation as "a major disaster."

He said he expected President Fidel Ramos, who was to return later Monday from an overnight visit to Malaysia, to declare a state of emergency in the badly hit areas.

Fergie and her prince ready to try again — paper

LONDON (R) — "Fergie" the fallen duchess and her estranged husband Prince Andrew are in love again and ready to get back together, hunking a trend of marital splits among Britain's royals and VIPs, Monday's Sun newspaper said. "They are now closer than they have ever been since they split up," it quoted an unnamed royal official as saying. The Sun said the couple, who married in 1986 but separated in 1992 — followed a few months later by Prince Andrew's brother, Prince Charles, and his wife, Princess Diana — were on the brink of resuming married life. The couple had enjoyed a secret holiday together in Spain — "like our honeymoon but better", the duchess was quoted as saying — and were spending up to four nights a week in each other's company, the tabloid said. It is unclear whether a reconciliation would please the royal establishment, which grew hostile to Prince Andrew's wife Sarah — her nickname comes from her maiden name, Ferguson — after she was deemed too frivolous and lightweight to be a royal. The couple have two daughters, seven-year-old Princess Beatrice and Princess Eugenie, aged five. For heir to the throne Prince Charles and Princess Diana, reconciliation seems a faint prospect. Most Britons think they should divorce and put their marriage out of its misery, according to a weekend poll conducted after Princess Diana was blamed in the media for helping wreck the marriage of popular rugby hero Will Carling. In an article next to the Prince Andrew and Fergie good-news story on the Sun's front page, Carling said he had been naive and stupid over his friendship with Princess Diana. It has been a bad few months for Britain's most glamorous partnerships. Kenneth Branagh and Emma Thompson, the country's golden acting couple, said this weekend they were separating and in the summer, actor Hugh Grant's arrest with a Hollywood prostitute put his relationship with supermodel Liz Hurley in jeopardy.

Danish police arrest jailbreak mastermind

COPENHAGEN (R) — Danish police arrested in a remote farmhouse the presumed mastermind behind a spectacular mass jailbreak one month ago when a bulldozer smashed a hole in the prison wall. Lars Hinchinson, dubbed the "escape king" by the media because he has broken out of jail eight times, was arrested along with a fellow fugitive and convicted murderer, police inspector Anders Eg said. Mr. Hinchinson, a 31-year-old narcotics trader, was arrested with Steen Reinholdt, 28, outside Viborg in northwestern Jutland after a tipoff from neighbours.

Mussolini was mad about Mickey Mouse

ROME (R) — Italy's stern fascist dictator Benito Mussolini was mad about Mickey Mouse, hailed Snow White And The Seven Dwarves as a masterpiece and sang Disney songs to his children at home, according to his son Romano. The dictator, dubbed "Il Duce", had a "very friendly" meeting with his comic-creator hero, Walt Disney, in Rome in 1935, Romano told the magazine Immagini E.

Fumetti. "He took him to (his official residence), Villa Torlonia and they talked about Mickey Mouse, Minnie and Donald Duck." Romano remembered his father being so taken with Snow White that he wanted to see it, again and again.

Murayama faces strident attack in parliament

TOKYO (R) — Japan's opposition Monday stepped up demands for Prime Minister Tomichi Murayama's resignation over what it called poor election results for his Socialist Party and the government's inept handling of the economy.

"Japan's citizens have made a clear expression of no confidence in the Murayama administration," opposition leader Tsutomu Hata told parliament.

"The right way to take responsibility is to quit," said Mr. Hata. Mr. Murayama's predecessor as prime minister and a senior leader of the opposition Shinshinto (New Frontier Party).

But Mr. Murayama vowed to stay at the helm of what he last week christened the "government of economic recovery."

"We will continue to maintain the coalition and implement reform and responsible politics," Mr. Murayama told parliament in answer to the criticism.

Mr. Murayama's coalition

of Socialists, the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) and the Sakigake party retains a majority in both houses of parliament — even though the electorate dealt each of the parties an embarrassing blow in last July's upper house polls.

Mr. Hata's attack on the government opened the parliamentary question-and-answer session at the start of a 46-day extraordinary diet session.

The focus of the session is a five trillion Yen (\$50 billion) supplementary budget, the largest extra budget to be submitted in Japan's parliament.

The budget forms part of a 14.2 trillion Yen (\$142 billion) package of economic measures Murayama unveiled earlier this month, which includes additional public works spending and funds for infrastructure and research in new industries.

In addition to blasting Murayama's 15-month-old government for clinging to power, Mr. Hata faulted the administration for taking only half-measures on the

economy. "Government economic measures stop at mere treatments," he said, echoing economists' criticism that Mr. Murayama's wobbly coalition has not taken the drastic reform measures necessary to cure Japan's economic ills.

Mr. Hata called for bolder steps to deal with financial institutions' bad loans and more efforts to overhaul the tax system and cut government red tape.

By stressing tax reform and deregulation, Shinshinto is seeking to seize the high ground on reform steps that experts say are necessary for Japan to end its prolonged recession but which the ruling coalition is bitterly divided over.

But there are also internal divisions within Shinshinto over the issue and that makes the 10-month-old conservative opposition body vulnerable.

Even if the opposition and ruling camps cooperate on economic policy, analysts expect the two sides to

come to blows over the administration's proposed bill to tighten government control on religious groups.

The bills were ostensibly drafted in response to the fatal gasings, kidnappings and other criminal acts allegedly committed by the doomsday Aum Shinri Kyo (Supreme Truth Sect).

But Shinshinto leaders say the LDP-inspired bill is an underhand attempt to reign in the lay Buddhist group Soka Gakkai, whose nationwide network supports the opposition. "Moves to revise the religious organization law are extremely political and come from extremely impure motives," said Mr. Hata.

Also looming as an explosive issue is debate over the U.S.-Japan security relationship amid mounting public anger over the rape last month of a young Okinawan schoolgirl, allegedly by U.S. servicemen stationed on the southern Japanese island.

Comoros Coups leaders appoint presidents

MORONI, Comoro Islands (R) — Military coup leaders appointed two civilian presidents in the Comoro Islands Monday as resentment grew against French soldiers of fortune Bob Denard.

A French naval show of force off the Indian Ocean islands meanwhile put local troops on edge four days after a coup spearheaded by white mercenaries toppled the government of President Said Mohamed Djohar.

A committee set up by the coup leaders named two civilian joint presidents and a secretary-general before elections they had promised within two weeks to strengthen public support.

State-run Comoros Radio identified the two presidents as Mohammad Taki Abdoul Karim and Said Ali Kamal and the secretary-general as Omar Tamou. All were civilians from the main island.

Captain Combo Ayoub, the coup leader, was quoted by French television as saying he had handed power over to two civilians.

Capt. Combo and other opponents of the government were freed from prison by white mercenaries and set up a Transitional Military Committee (TMC) before elections in this Islamic republic of some 450,000 people.

"They want to give the people confidence that the army wants to hand real power back to civilians," a Moroni resident said.

But many Comorians said although they supported the ouster of President Djohar, they wanted Denard, who has a Comoran wife and citizenship, to leave with his band of hired guns.

"Denard: Where of the Comoros," read a banner on two bedsheets strung up in central Badjannani Square in the capital Moroni a day after an opposition rally in support of the coup.

A French patrol boat shuttled repeatedly offshore about six kilometers from Moroni, clearly visible from the main Kandami Barracks where Denard was believed to be based.

Several French naval vessels headed for the Comoros Sunday from Djibouti and La Reunion and French forces were on alert to protect French citizens on the islands if necessary.

"Soldiers who backed last Thursday's coup spearheaded by the 66-year-old French soldier of fortune and some 20 white mercenaries appeared more edgy Monday, refusing to allow foreign journalists even to approach the barracks entrance.

"There is a plan in place for the evacuation of the 1,487 French nationals if it is warranted," said French embassy Consul Alain Goulier, declining to comment about the French military moves.

He also declined to say how many members of the former government had sought asylum in the French embassy in Moroni.

"The solution depends on the departure of the mercenaries and the restoration of political institutions without the president," said Sultan Chouhrou, a former ambassador to Paris.

"We don't want Djohar and Denard should leave as quickly as possible," he told Reuters. "The problem of Denard's presence is its effect on international opinion with the Comoros depending on international aid for about 80 per cent of its income."

The former government has appealed to the international community to withhold recognition of the new power in Moroni.



Philippine President Fidel Ramos (right) chats with Malaysian Prime Minister Mahathir Mohammad before their official meeting in Kuala Lumpur. Mr. Ramos arrived in Malaysia for a two-day working visit (AFP photo)

Ramos seeks South East Asian unity

KUALA LUMPUR, Malaysia (AP) — South East Asian nations must strive for greater unity if they want to establish peace, freedom and stability, Philippine President Fidel Ramos said Monday.

Mr. Ramos, who arrived Sunday for a two-day visit, was speaking at the opening of an international discourse and exhibition on Filipino freedom fighter Jose P. Rizal, organized jointly by institutes in the two countries.

Mr. Ramos said Rizal, who died in 1896, was the first regional fighter against colonialism and that those in the region now are the beneficiaries.

"Our task today is to enrich this legacy of liberty, to shape South East Asia's future according to our noblest hopes. And this we can do only if we strive for a higher unity than we have now."

"Only the unification of South East Asia will enable us to take command of our own fortunes and establish a zone of peace, freedom and stability," Mr. Ramos said.

North Korean leader turns down requests to assume power — report

SEOUL (AFP) — North Korean leader Kim Jong-Il has not heeded repeated calls to assume the country's top posts, showing that the North's media called "prudent and polished" state management, monitors here said Monday.

In a broadcast Sunday, Central Radio in Pyongyang said Mr. Kim had "held back" from the calls by his aides to succeed his father, Kim Il-Sung, as head of state, said Naewoe Press, an official South Korean monitoring agency.

The broadcast said the younger Kim showed his "prudent and polished management of state affairs," unprecedented in the succession of power in other countries and beyond the comprehension of ordinary people.

The broadcast, which cited an unidentified Russian commentary, came amid Pyongyang's massive preparations for the Oct. 10 anniversary celebrations of the founding of the country.

Simpson jury faces difficult decision

LOS ANGELES (R) — After nine months of testimony, the jury in the O.J. Simpson trial began deliberations Monday to decide if the former football great is guilty of murdering his ex-wife and her friend.

With the eyes of the world watching them, the mostly black jury of 10 men and two women face a difficult task: Do they agree with prosecutors and convict O.J. Simpson of murdering Nicole Brown Simpson and her friend Ronald Goldman? Or do they agree with Simpson's defence team, which characterised the legendary sports hero as a victim of a police conspiracy, and vote to acquit him?

When the jury of nine blacks, two whites and one Hispanic begin their deliberations, they will have more than 40,000 pages of evidence and 1,000 exhibits to help them.

The jury, which has been sequestered in a hotel since Jan. 11, told Judge Lance Ito they would deliberate six days a week, Monday through Saturday, from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. pdt (1600 to 2400 GMT), with one hour for lunch.

Most observers expect the jury to take at least 10 days to two weeks to reach a verdict.

Among the choices are acquittal, conviction on either first-degree or second-degree murder, or a split verdict.

If Simpson is acquitted, he cannot be tried again for the crime under double jeopardy rules. However, if he is found guilty of first-degree murder he will spend the rest of his life behind bars.

Even though California has the death penalty, the maximum punishment Simpson can receive is life in prison because prosecutors waived their right last year to seek the death penalty in this case.

If the jury finds Simpson guilty of two counts of second-degree murder, Ito can sentence Simpson to at least 15 years in prison.

A hung jury, which some observers maintain is possible, would mean Simpson could be tried again for the murders.

Simpson, who has steadfastly denied he had anything to do with the murders, did not testify in the case.

Famed attorney Alan Dershowitz, who is a member of the defence team, defended the decision Sunday, saying it would have diverted attention from flaws in the prosecution's case.

"We were all very satisfied he would have been a superb witness and he would have testified without the need for much preparation," Mr. Dershowitz said on CNN.

Portugal's Socialists see stable government after wining polls

LISBON (R) — Portugal's triumphant Socialist Party was confident Monday of forming a stable and durable government despite falling short of an absolute parliamentary majority in Sunday's vote.

"I believe the Socialist vote was sufficiently strong and clear to guarantee a government lasting the whole of the legislature's four-year life," senior party official Joaquim Pina Moura said in a radio interview.

The Socialist Party had its best ever result Sunday, winning just under 44 per cent of the vote to end a decade of rule by the centre-right Social Democrats (PSD).

Although the final count looks set to leave the Socialists a few seats short of outright control of the 230-member parliament, Portuguese President Mario Soares will ask party leader Antonio Guterres to form a government.

But the summons will take some days as there are still eight seats in parliament to be awarded — the four elected by Portugal's emigrants and four constituencies where the ballot will be re-taken after local protests prevented voting.

The fresh vote will be held on Oct. 8 while the emigrant ballots will be counted on Oct. 11. Only after that will Soares will be free to offer Guterres formally the mandate.

Political analysts expected the Socialist Party, which had never won more than 37 per cent in a national election before, to end up with 112 seats to the PSD's 88 with the hard-left Communist Party and the right-wing Popular Party having 15 each.

After the Socialists, the other big winner in Sunday's vote was the Popular Party which tripled its parliamentary presence from the five members it held in the previous legislature.

The party is committed to free market economic policies and to continuing the privatisations begun by the PSD government of outgoing Premier Anibal Cavaco Silva.

It has said that creating the conditions for Portugal to be amongst the European Union countries wedding their economies in monetary union will be its number one priority.

But it is also offering a new style after the slightly authoritarian Cavaco Silva whose government became increasingly tarnished by small but persistent cases of corruption and power abuse.

Independent Lisbon daily O Publico saluted the vote as proof that Portugal's democracy had come of age.

"Never before had the Portuguese people shown such a strong, united and mature wish for democratic alternation (of power)," it said in an editorial.



Fernando Nogueira

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Leftists win Latvia poll despite rightist gain

RIGA (R) — The left-leaning Democratic Party "Saimnieks" (Master) was declared winner of Latvian parliamentary elections Monday although a surge in support for a radical right-wing group caused a major upset.

Saimnieks took 18 seats to emerge as the biggest party in the 100-seat parliament. The ruling Latvia's Way Party dropped one seat but still came second with 17 deputies.

But the unfancied right-wing People's Movement For Latvia, also known as the Siegerist Party, gained a shock 16 seats to be the third biggest party in parliament.

The party is led by maverick German politician Joachim Siegerist — who cannot speak Latvian — whose stance has been strongly anti-Russian and anti-Communist. However, its other key policies are nuclear.

Some 700,000 ethnic Russians live in Latvia. Most do not have citizenship and are not allowed to vote in the elections.

Weeks or even months of haggling are now likely as the biggest parties seek compromise to form a coalition that can command a majority in the parliament.

"The results are fantastically good and I counted on that," Mr. Siegerist told Latvian Television early Monday.

Analysts said Mr. Siegerist's brand of populist politics had swung the undecided voters on election day.

His party runs an office which offers free medicine to Riga pensioners and in an earlier election he transported voters to polling stations by bus and gave out free bananas and lemonade.

"It's an example of the gaping hole that exists between the Latvian political elite and people who live in the countryside, where they feel absolutely alienated from what is happening in Riga and in government," said Paul Raudsep, managing editor of daily newspaper Diena, explaining Siegerist's success.

The result went against pre-election opinion polls which predicted that a bloc of two right-leaning parties, the Farmers Union and the LNNK, had a good chance of gaining enough seats between them to form the core of a coalition government.

But both did badly in the weekend voting. The LNNK won eight seats and the Farmers Union seven.

The radical nationalist grouping For Fatherland and Freedom, which wants to introduce even tougher legislation on citizenship, was placed fourth with 14 seats.

Mr. Raudsep said some parties which won seats, such as the Socialist Party and the left-wing Latvian Unity Party, had benefited from protest votes.

Quebec officially began its referendum campaign on the separation of the French-speaking province from Canada Sunday as public opinion polls showed lagging support for separation.

Quebec's separatist Premier Jacques Parizeau issued the writ for the Oct. 30 referendum in which Quebec voters will be asked whether the province should become sovereign after offering to negotiate a new economic union with Canada.

"I think we'll make it. I think we'll have a country pretty soon," Mr. Parizeau said at a news conference. However, opinion polls published over the weekend, including an internal poll for the ruling Parti Quebecois, show that a majority of Quebec voters do not want to separate.

A survey by the Crop agency published Saturday showed that 55 per cent of Quebecers would vote against separation, while 45 per cent would back it.

On Sunday, the Parti Quebecois released an internal poll showing that 52.4 per cent of respondents said they would vote 'no' to separation, and 47.6 per cent would vote 'yes'.

"I don't think that we're trailing all that badly," Mr. Parizeau said.

The premier said the poll showed the tide is turning in favour of Quebec separatist forces. But the latest polls show Quebec voters' support for separation has declined in recent weeks — a poll published three weeks ago showed the two sides virtually tied.

In a speech televised across Quebec Sunday evening, Mr. Parizeau said there is something "absurd" in the rest of Canada's refusal to recognise Quebecers as a "people."

He said a vote for Quebec sovereignty will give Quebecers the power to make choices for themselves about their future.

"We will be a majority in our own country, affirming once and for all our Francophone language and culture," Mr. Parizeau said.

Mr. Parizeau warned that if Quebec voters turn down separation, they will be affected by federal government budget cuts that among other things would reduce their public old-age pensions.

"If we vote 'no,' we will be subject to the choice of others," Mr. Parizeau said.

In his televised address to Quebecers, Daniel Johnson, leader of the liberal Party of Quebec and official head of Canadian unity forces, urged Quebecers to vote against separation.

Mr. Johnson warned that in voting for Quebec sovereignty, Quebecers would risk losing their Canadian citizenship and economic prosperity.

"The change proposed to us is radical and irreversible. With and despite its defects, Canadian federalism is a system of government that has served us well," Mr. Johnson said.

On Monday, separatist political forces, which include the Bloc Quebecois, a Quebec-based party in Canada's national legislature, will begin their campaign tour of the province. Mr. Johnson's campaign tour started last week.

Voters in the province, whose seven million people make up a quarter of Canada's population, rejected a similar separation proposal in a referendum in 1980.

The NP has been battling internal divisions over its dual role as the junior partner in government to Mr. Mandela's ANC and as the country's largest opposition party.

It is a balancing act that has not been comfortable, especially for Mr. De Klerk, who has had to mediate between feuding sections of his party.

Mr. De Klerk's once cordial relationship with Mr. Mandela has also been steadily deteriorating, culminating in the joint 1993 Nobel Peace laureates having an angry spat on a Johannesburg sidewalk late Friday.

Danish police arrest jailbreak mastermind

COPENHAGEN (R) — Danish police arrested the prime suspect in the prison break-out on Monday, a mass public demonstration against the police action followed.

The prison with 140 inmates, dubbed the "Cape King" by the media, broke out last night. The escape was followed by a large number of inmates, some of whom were armed with knives and clubs.

Mussolini was mad about Mickey Mouse

MILAN (R) — Italy's semi-official historian Remo Ceschi-De was mad about Mickey Mouse. He said that the cartoon character was a symbol of the American way of life and that Mussolini was obsessed with it.

He said that Mussolini was a fan of Mickey Mouse and that he often watched the cartoon. He said that Mussolini was so obsessed with Mickey Mouse that he even had a Mickey Mouse clock in his study.

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Trial going awry

THE TRIAL of 49 members of the Muslim Brotherhood by a military court in Cairo has naturally attracted the attention of the world community since what is at issue there pertains to everything dear to the forces of democracy across the globe. Two immediate concerns come to mind when considering the decision by the Egyptian government to try the Islamists before a military tribunal.

The first is whether the Brotherhood can still be viewed as an illegal organisation or party in a system of government that is on record as promoting pluralistic democracy. Indeed Egypt, like all states that ratified the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), is treaty-obligated to accord all shades of opinion, ideology or faith the right to express themselves peacefully, promote their ideals and enter open competition of ideas among themselves. This is after all the essence of democracy which nations have accepted as the norm for governing. The failure or success of the Islamists, or any other faction for that matter, must be solved freely by the people when they are offered the periodic opportunities to cast their ballots. No leadership can ever contend that it knows better than its own people what is best for them.

The second concern is that the rationale behind shifting the trial of the Islamists to a military court cannot withstand the challenges posed by the contemporary standards for fair trial as espoused repeatedly by international human rights instruments. The mere expression of preference for military trials is a vote of no confidence in the judicial system of government.

Surely, Cairo does not wish and should not wish to tell the world that it has no faith or trust in its own civil court system. Neither the ICCPR nor any other human rights treaty or convention to which Egypt is a party would tolerate military trials of civilians who are allegedly members of an outlawed party, especially when the accused are in no way connected with violent or terrorist acts. Even then, there is nothing that should prevent a national court from looking into their case since their very membership in the Muslim Brotherhood is a contentious issue, and the legality of this group is questioned, only on the basis of dubious legislation that can be regarded as unlawful, either through being contrary to the constitution of the land, or the stipulations of the ICCPR and other relevant international treaties that have the force of law in Egypt as elsewhere.

ARABIC PRESS COMMENTARIES

AL RA'I daily Monday condemned the continued expulsion of Palestinians from Libya. Saying that there is no justification for the deportation of Palestinians, the paper rejected Tripoli's claim that the Palestinians are leaving by their own free will. The Libyan leaders realise that the Palestinians yearn to go back home, and that they are living temporarily in Arab and non-Arab countries until the time comes for them to be repatriated, continued the paper. The Libyans also realise that the Palestinians do not accept a substitute for Palestine as a homeland, and are waiting for the appropriate and convenient circumstances to make the trip back home. It added. The mass expulsion of Palestinians lends real credibility to the views of the Palestinian leadership, which has been negotiating with Israel to recover Palestinian land, and which has accepted what has been offered to it although the Israeli offer does not fulfil the Palestinian people's aspirations, said the daily. The Palestinian leadership is keen on reestablishing a homeland for the Palestinian people, so that they go home when they are no longer wanted in the host Arab states.

A WRITER in Al Dustour said Israeli Foreign Minister Shimon Peres's proposal for a confederation between Jordan and Palestine is aimed at serving Israel's own demographic, political and security interests. Israel does not want a Palestinian state to emerge on its borders; and by suggesting the confederation idea it is trying to find a solution to its own predicament and save the Jewish state the trouble of accepting or coexisting with a Palestinian state, said Taher Al Adwan. The writer said that Palestinians, like all other people, have the right to determine their own fate and create their own independent and sovereign state. The question of unity or confederation between Palestine and Jordan concerns the Jordanians and Palestinians alone, continued the writer. Israel has to comply with the requirements of peace and refrain from talking about this confederation which it had destroyed by its 1967 occupation of the West Bank, said the writer. He said by suggesting a confederation at this stage, Israel is trying to avoid meeting its commitments of returning to the Palestinians their full rights in their homeland, and most particularly avoid discussing the question of Jerusalem, which the Palestinians seek to establish as their own capital.

The View from Fourth Circle

Snake oil salesmen, false prophets, the business of faith

By Rami G. Khouri

OURS IS a very ancient, deeply spiritual and very mercantile land, and therefore an appropriate venue for business, gods, and the interaction of these two very serious, very weighty phenomena. Gods and the spirituality sector are very dear to us here in the Middle East. We often invoke the name of God in our everyday speech and greetings. No secularism here. This is spirituality country.

Until now, and for about the last, oh, five thousand or so years, Middle Eastern spirituality has tended to focus on human moral values and behavioural codes, always dictated by gods, and brought to us by holy messengers. In ancient Egyptian and Mesopotamian times, there was little difference between gods, prophets and messengers. With the advent of Judaism, Christianity and Islam, we started to differentiate between the monotheistic God himself and His messengers and prophets on earth, who in turn were usually seen as distinct from kings, caesars and other temporal political rulers.

The Middle East has been a world leader in the spirituality business, exporting religions, gods and prophets to the rest of the world. Nearly half the world's population are Christians, Muslims or Jews, worshippers of the god that was first formally identified and deified in this region.

Now, however, the days when we set the tone for the world's faith industry are slowly coming to an end. For we here in the principal vortex of global spirituality are very quickly succumbing to a new god that coexists happily with our existing gods, faiths and moral memories: the god of the market.

At several recent conferences and workshops in Amman that included participants from the United States, Europe and Israel, I have been struck by the extraordinarily uniform and widespread emphasis that has been placed on two parallel phenomena: Free market economic reforms at home, and attracting foreign capital from abroad.

These are no longer mere economic principles or policy options; they have been elevated to the rank of faith, and, like faith, they are spreading around the world at a brisk pace. Sometimes they attract new believers on the strength of their own compelling logic; often, they are spread by missionaries of the free market faith; and in some cases, they are imposed in the manner that political and economic systems were imposed in the colonial days of old.

I am suspicious of this new faith because of several related points: a) it is offered as a solution to all of our domestic and regional ills, b) it is offered by virtually everyone coming at us from the West in general, but more specifically from the United States, and c) it comes with a series of tried and tested moral/market formulae for behaviour that is guaranteed to bring us to paradise, or the

promised land, or at least a nice house in a quiet residential district of our city — wherever on earth our city may be. I am reminded of the snake oil salesmen in the American West in the late 19th century, who sold a single remedy for all the ailments that an ordinary person could ever suffer — and who disappeared out of town as soon as they sold a few dozen bottles of the miracle cure.

I would like to suggest a word of caution here, before we in Jordan or others in the Middle East embrace this new god of the market without sufficiently assessing its full costs and implications. I am not saying that we should reject it; I am saying that we should be far more selective in adopting the strengths of free market economics, while retaining the strengths of economic systems in which the private and public sectors coordinate their policies within a wider framework of national identity that is much less secular and slightly less mercantile than the systems of the industrialised West.

The rush to embrace free market systems in Jordan and other Middle Eastern states takes place at a moment when most of our economies suffer high unemployment and politically volatile poverty levels. Privatisation and market economics will aggravate both of these trends in the short run, at a moment when governments are fiscally and managerially incapable of reducing the negative impacts of free marketisation on families and individuals.

The moral and political triumph of the free market as the new god that defines the moral behaviour of individuals and states in the Middle East is likely to be troubling and disconcerting for tens of millions of people. Many will suffer such despair that they will translate their sentiments into disruptive political action. In South and Central America and Eastern Europe, we have ample models of countries that adopted free market systems at a very high cost to their people. There are no surprises in this new religion. We know how many people will lose their jobs, and how many others will never find jobs. The rules of the creed are written in many books, and etched into the modern history of many other lands.

The question for us in Jordan is: How do we deal with this enigmatic situation? We know that we have to reform and we know that free market economics brings many real benefits. Western Europe and Eastern Asia offer good examples of how market economics, coupled with strong social benefits systems, generated rising prosperity for all while minimising the number of people who fell through the cracks and suffered chronic poverty and despair. Can we reform our economies in such a way that we prompt real growth in a sustainable manner, while protecting the

interests of the weak and marginalised?

The evidence to date during the past decade is not very impressive in the Middle East, where the growing poor class has been politically written off, and where its expressions of frustration and despair have been dealt with through three parallel mechanisms: outright disdain for their needs, violent political pacification, or the rise of gangsterism.

Our particular dilemma is heavily rooted in timing: The snake oil merchants and the free market faith preachers proselytise amongst us at a moment when we are trying to build on the full promise of the Arab-Israeli peace process. If the market is the new faith, the promise of peace is the new prophet on whose back the faith will be spread to the multitudes.

These are facts that we cannot dismiss or wish away. We have to deal with the market religion and its power in a manner that allows us to tap its genuine benefits without having to swallow all of its empty promises as well.

The reason that snake oil salesmen lasted so long is that they made a lot of money. This was a very profitable business for the merchants who did not have to live in the communities where they did business. They kept travelling from town to town at a pace that never allowed their disappointed old clients to expose them to unsuspecting new buyers.

The market religion is a different matter altogether. We know its strengths and weaknesses, its real promises and its empty rhetoric. Most important of all, we know what we have to do to minimise the impact of widespread market reforms on the poor and vulnerable, so that market economics brings hope and better living standards to the vast majority of our people.

It is important that we recognise the snake oil salesmen amongst us today who will try to sell us a magic cure for all of our ailments, without necessarily taking that same cure themselves for their similar ailments. The market is not a god, and we should not be so naive to believe that it can solve all of our problems.

As I said at the start, ours is a very ancient, deeply spiritual and very mercantile land. Prophets come and go, and even gods themselves rise and fall. But people endure — unless they get drunk on the snake oil, and, like false prophets, die alone from the ignominy of their own deception, shallowness and desperation. It would be very ironic if we, who sorted out many of history's true faiths from the fakes, would now roll over in moral confusion and material greed at the sight of yet another ambitious salesman in the fancy dress of a worldly saviour.



M. KAHIL

MOHER RUSSIA

Japan's LDP gives itself a leader with credentials

By Douglas H. Paal

WASHINGTON — With the election of Ryutaro Hashimoto as president of Japan's Liberal Democratic Party (LDP), America will be tempted either to congratulate themselves or to bemoan the fact that the controversial tactics of Mickey Kantor, the U.S. trade representative, helped move Mr. Hashimoto to the top of Japan's political ladder.

It is true that by calling Mr. Kantor's trade bluff earlier this year, Mr. Hashimoto, as trade minister, gained for himself a wealth of approving publicity in Japan. By stalling down U.S. demands and agreeing only to extend trade trends decided during the Bush administration, albeit at diminished levels, he satisfied growing Japanese nationalist sentiment. In this narrow sense, it is therefore true that the Clinton team helped to put its most capable trade adversary into higher office.

It would be wrong, however, to conclude that American mismanagement is at the heart of Mr. Hashimoto's rise. In fact, he has come to embody in his personal style some of the powerful reformist impulses in Japan, impulses that have been frustrated with the failure of a succession of governments since 1993.

First, Mr. Hashimoto demonstrates unusually strong leadership traits, in marked contrast with most of his contemporaries. He is well-informed about the intricacies of policy, and decisive in a way that can sometimes

appear abrupt in Japan. Senior Japanese bureaucrats speak of his active style in the briefing sessions that form the nexus between Japanese political and bureaucratic power. The last leader with this level of executive skill was Prime Minister Yasuhiro Nakasone, another standard.

Second, although he is a member of the traditionalist Takeshita faction of the LDP, Mr. Hashimoto has a personally clean reputation. According to one senior bureaucrat who knows him well, he has cultivated his "lone wolf" image precisely to set himself apart from the typical go-along-to-get-along LDP members.

The desire for clean politics runs deep in contemporary Japan, and Mr. Hashimoto has a chance to capture the reformist banner back from the newly created opposition parties. If he succeeds, the odds are long, the irony of reform coming from within the LDP will be intense.

Third, despite Mr. Hashimoto's exploitation of anti-U.S. sentiment, he rises from the mainstream of LDP foreign policy, which continues to regard Japan's relationship with America as its core. Maintenance of good, productive relations with Washington will be one of his top priorities, according to well-informed officials around him in Tokyo. His previous focus on economic issues will be expanded to embrace security issues as well in a display of his capacity for flexibility and personal growth.

But Mr. Hashimoto will insist on more balanced, mutually respectful and interest-based relations. For him, as for most Japanese, misty-eyed emotional ties to America belong to the past. A rational calculation of Japan's interests will re-inforce continued strong ties, but trade and other frictions will force a gradual estrangement onto that calculation.

Does Mr. Hashimoto have liabilities? One seasoned observer in Tokyo said that he tends to be "too explicit" in his politics. Japan's traditional culture values consensus reached through indirect, nearly invisible political manoeuvre, where real intentions often remain implicit. It is not yet clear that Tokyo's political circles are ready for Mr. Hashimoto's direct approach, despite the public sentiment behind him.

The LDP is part of the coalition government led by Socialist Prime Minister Tomichi Murayama. Mr. Hashimoto's rise to the presidency of the LDP will not automatically make him prime minister. He is likely to remain trade minister or become foreign minister and deputy prime minister in the months ahead.

If he remains trade minister, it would embolden bureaucrats in his ministry and frighten those in the Foreign Ministry who see themselves saddled with weak leadership under their present minister, Yohei Kono, whom Mr. Hashimoto defeated in the LDP picketing. More likely, Mr.

Hashimoto will become foreign minister in a cabinet reshuffle later in the autumn.

When President Bill Clinton and other heads of government arrive in Osaka in November for the leaders' meeting of the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation forum, they will probably be dealing with Mr. Murayama as a lame duck prime minister. Mr. Hashimoto will be there, but will have a convenient excuse to deflect pressures from his visitors. This will reinforce the very strong sentiment in Tokyo to take "no new initiatives" for America.

By aiming barbs at Japan's bureaucrats, the Clinton administration has turned them into well-motivated adversaries who will be reluctant to do anything to help get the U.S. president re-elected.

Once Japan completes its sacrosanct annual budget process in December-January, the political climate will shift and pressures are expected to grow for a general election under the new reformed procedures. If, as seems likely, the LDP obtains a plurality or majority, Mr. Hashimoto will be well-placed to become prime minister.

The writer, who served at the National Security Council under Ronald Reagan and George Bush, is president of the Asia Pacific Policy Centre, a research institute in Washington. He contributed this comment to the International Herald Tribune.

Oman trade link with Israel a psychological move

By Ashraf Fouad
Reuter

DUBAI — Oman's surprise decision to forge trade ties with Israel effectively bypasses an Arab League resolution for the economic boycott of the Jewish state. But analysts said on Monday the move was largely psychological.

"This is more of a psychological move than one that would lead to immediate diplomatic ties and other practical steps," said a well-placed Arab analyst in Oman.

"It is no longer a novelty," another analyst said. "Everyone is meeting with them (Israeli officials) and the Gulf states are attending the multilateral (Middle East) peace talks."

The foreign ministers of Oman and Israel agreed at a meeting in New York on Saturday night to exchange trade representative offices as part of efforts to boost economic cooperation.

Arab analysts said Oman was not expected to depart from a general Gulf Arab policy not to fully normalise ties with Israel until a comprehensive Middle East peace settlement which includes Syria and Lebanon was reached.

"Yes, it is a step towards eventual full ties, but do not expect that very soon. We all have to wait to see the next steps" towards an Israeli accord with both Syria and Lebanon, said the Oman-based analyst.

Oman is the only member of the six-nation Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) to forge official trade ties with Israel. Following talks with U.S. Secretary of State Warren

Christopher in New York last year, GCC states agreed to lift the secondary economic boycott of firms dealing with Israel.

"GCC states made it clear last year they were ready to back lifting the primary boycott of Israel if a (Arab) League member directly involved in the peace process made such a proposal to the league," said another analyst.

"Oman did not go against the GCC by doing so," he added.

The Riyadh-based alliance, which is due to hold its next annual summit in Oman in December, also includes Kuwait, the United Arab Emirates, Qatar and Bahrain.

Analysts said that while some Gulf states might decide to do follow Oman's example, they did not expect these to include Saudi Arabia, the GCC's dominant partner and largest economy.

"The biggest country on the block can't play this game," one analyst said. "Even in Muscat's case, analysts said, Israeli products were not expected to be available soon on the Omani market."

"It is not completely discounted but it will take time. It will also be difficult in the beginning for Omani consumers to go out and buy a 'made in Israel' product," one said.

Israel's Foreign Ministry said in a statement on Sunday night that the agreement with Oman was meant to "encourage cooperation... in economic and technical fields."

It said the two sides were discussing joint water, agricultural, medical and telecommunications projects.

LETTERS

Strict response warranted

To the Editor:

MR. SALAMEH Ne'emati's allegations that some officials, journalists or even members of Parliament are on the payroll of a foreign embassy requires an uncompromising, strict response from our national newspapers, which were renowned for their neutrality and objectivity.

Mr. Ne'emati must receive his information straight from the source. After all, professional journalism requires education, veracity and culture.

Said D. Khalifeh,
Amman

The Jordan Times welcomes letters and contributions from its readers on any subject they wish to tackle. Letters intended for publication, however, should contain the writer's full name and preferably address as well. Names can be withheld only upon request and under special circumstances. Letters are subject to editing. The newspaper is not responsible for the return of unused manuscripts.

ni G. Khouri

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Blood pact that must end in gore

Europe's current timetable for a single currency will lead to political disaster, predicts David Marsh



Timetable for a single currency will lead to political disaster

Helmut Kohl and Jacques Chirac appear to be heading for doom

for the upset. Part of the culpability does indeed attach to France and those other would-be EMU members who are still a long way from fulfilling the economic criteria (particularly on government deficits and debt) that were agreed in 1991 as determining the suitability of individual economies to join a single currency. The prime responsibility, however, for the EMU plan almost certainly having to be shelved lies with Germany, the country which (along with France) drove the Maastricht process to show that the new reunified Germany was just as reliable and committed to European integration as the old Western-oriented Federal Republic.

From Mr. Kohl downwards, the Bonn establishment has always supported EMU, essentially for reasons of foreign policy. Yet ever since the plan was batched at the end of the Eighties, the German electorate has consistently shown that it does not want to give up the mark. Many ordinary Germans instinctively feel that a new European currency would be less secure than the one that has guided them for nearly half a century. The mark has become a badge and instrument of post-war stability and prosperity. The reticence of the public is shared by much of German industry, particularly small and medium-sized firms, although the big banks have supported the EMU idea so far.

Waigel's blunt remarks were simply the latest sign of Bonn's cooling towards EMU in the past few years. Mr. Kohl in Majorca did his

implacable best to calm jangled European nerves, but German politicians have now fully grasped the mood of the burgher in the street. In a country as democratic as Germany has now become, no measure as significant and sweeping as the replacement of the cur-

rency can be undertaken without the support of the people.

To improve the EMU's public image, the government has attempted to introduce additional conditions governing German

participation, going beyond the criteria written into the Maastricht treaty. Yet with each new requirement — first that monetary union should be accompanied by an (as yet undefined) form of political union, then that the European central bank should be in Frankfurt,

then that the new currency should not be called 'the ecu, and now (as Waigel suggested last week) that the EMU debt criteria should be further toughened — with each of these the impression has grown that Germany is seeking to escape its treaty

worse, by its partners. This is precisely the effect Mr. Kohl was most eager to avoid.

What happens next? The trouble with EMU is that it is both politically explosive and beset by pitfalls of great technical complexity, where each apparent solution grows into a Hydra's head of fresh problems. Bending the EMU rules to allow innocuous little Belgium to join, for instance, is difficult to manage because Italy (which the Bundesbank most firmly wants to keep out) could then claim it was being unfairly treated. Similarly, insisting that EMU can take place only with a small "core" group (of Germany and the Benelux countries, and possibly France) is convincing only up to a point. Such an outcome would not remove the threat of competitive devaluations, particularly worrisome to German industry, by countries such as the U.K., Italy, Spain and Sweden.

The storm clouds over the Maastricht plan will almost inevitably force a postponement of EMU. Yet the subject will remain on European politicians' agendas, not least because the resulting economic turbulence will, if anything, increase the mirage-like appeal of the goal of currency stability. One lesson of the Maastricht saga, however, must be learnt. A plan that appears noble and persuasive from a foreign policy point of view, yet which is perceived domestically as countering a country's fundamental interests, is likely not to succeed but to scatter the seeds of mistrust and misfortune.

It may even end with the gory head of one of the protagonists being brandished, as was Macbeth's in the final scene of the play.

The author is director of European strategy for Robert Fleming, the London-based investment bank. The above article is reprinted from the Independent.

Bosnia truce talks 'inconclusive'

(Continued from page 1)

new and more disturbing reports of robbery, often by men in uniforms, as opposed to the looting of abandoned houses," said U.N. spokesman Chris Gunness. "United Nations civilian police have reported at least ten cases of this in the past week," he added. Despite Croatian claims that it had arrested hundreds of people in connection with looting, Mr. Gunness said that the attacks continued into last week, more than six weeks since the offensive to retake the previously Serb-held Krajina region ended. "Until we see these activi-

ties halted, we will continue to believe that either there is a problem with command and control — and although the command has been given out it's not reaching the ground — or that at some level, there is a very low level, (there is) at least some kind of complicity in these acts," he told reporters. Croatian President Franjo Tudjman admitted last month that Croatian forces had engaged in some "reprisals" against Serbs, and condemned these acts, but said they were understandable. Mr. Gunness estimated that between 3,755 and 4,155 people remained in Croatia's devastated Krajina region

from a population of about 185,000 before the Croatian army took control in August. In some areas, 90 per cent of the homes were burned following the Croatian army's taking of the Krajina, which Serbs seized from Croats in 1991. Those who remained generally did so because they were too poor or too old to make the arduous trip made by others to Serbia, and these most vulnerable were being systematically victimised. "Whereas previously there was looting of abandoned, empty houses, now that people are back in their houses, or some people are back in, there are more and more cases of people being robbed at gunpoint," said Mr. Gunness.

a reply from the authorities," he said.

In Amman, Mr. Zanoun said: "We remind Colonel Qadhafi that it is the Palestinians who built his country. This action is stupid," Mr. Zanoun said, referring to the expulsions. He said he planned to talk "urgently" with Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak and the Arab League to stop the expulsions and ask the PLO to address the United Nations Security Council.

Mr. Zanoun accused the Arab League of dealing "carelessly" with the issue of the expelled Palestinians and said the PNC would seek international support to pressure Libya to reverse the expulsions decision. "We'll bring up the issue during the world parliamentarians conference this month," he said.

PLO demands prisoner release

(Continued from page 1)

ment will see what it can do about it." According to an Israeli version of the accord initiated in Taba, Egypt, last week, "all female detainees and prisoners shall be released" on the signing of the agreement. The 10 Israeli prisoners — among them Ami Popper who was jailed for shooting dead seven Palestinians in Israel in 1990 — took their case to Israel's high court of justice demanding an equal chance to be pardoned. Like the high court, Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin was against freeing them. The Israeli leader said on Sunday: "I think that whoever murders Palestinians out of a longing for revenge does not deserve a thing."

Israel has agreed to free about 2,000 of the 6,000 Palestinians it holds as part of the accord expanding 16-month-old Palestinian rule beyond Gaza and Jericho to more of the West Bank. "We will not try to force decisions onto the president," Mr. Rabin said after talks with Mr. Weizman on his return from Washington. "I presume he will bear in mind political and other factors, but ultimately the decision is his." The issue cleared one hurdle Monday when supreme court rejected an appeal to block the release of Palestinian prisoners. Mr. Weizman, who is also under pressure from the right-wing has said he will give his verdict on the releases after parliament meets on Thursday to vote on the autonomy accord. A narrow majority in par-

Exercises continue in Kuwait

(Continued from page 1)

Iraqi official in London Sunday said in saying the Sunday Times report was also an attempt to create tension in Kuwait. Kuwait said Sunday it was taking the report seriously, but chief U.N. weapons inspector Rolf Ekeus, asked whether there were any unusual troop movements in Iraq, said: "As far as I know, the atmosphere was quiet, cordial and relaxed." Mr. Ekeus was speaking to reporters in Bahrain where he arrived Sunday after a three-day visit to Iraq. Bahrain's emir said meanwhile that he supported efforts of the United Nations agency in charge of verifying that Iraq was dismantling its weapons of mass destruction, the Gulf News Agency (GNA) reported. It said Sheikh Isa Ben Sulman Al Khalifa made the

Quake kills at least 57 in Turkey

(Continued from page 1)

as Swiss rescue workers with sniffer dogs searched collapsed buildings for possible survivors. "It was a sudden, very violent tremor," said housewife Dondu Ucmak, 34. She was taking shelter in a tent, too frightened to return to her damaged home. "Everything in the house fell over and broke," she said. Single-storey shanty houses in the outskirts of the town were relatively undamaged. An earthquake killed 330 people in Dinar in 1925. Tur-

Children asked to vote for Saddam

(Continued from page 1)

BAGHDAD (AFP) — Iraqi children are to be asked to back Saddam Hussein as president in a special referendum to be carried out in schools next week, newspapers reported here Monday. Iraq's five million schoolchildren are being given the chance to vote on Oct. 11 because they are too young to take part in an unprecedented referendum to reelect Saddam Hussein as president four days later, the Iraqi Students' Federation said. In a message to President Saddam, quoted by the press, the government-run federation, said it wanted to allow pupils "to express their fidelity and loyalty to the leader for his paternal encouragement."

U.S. airports on security alert

(Continued from page 12)

many delays really. What people might notice is an increase in surveillance by airport police," said Tara Hamilton, spokeswoman for the two airports. "We'll have increased announcements... reminding people to keep an eye on their luggage. This is all in place, but it will be stepped up." Passengers should carry government-issued identification such as a driver's license or passport and expect bags to be checked more often than before, a spokeswoman for Chicago's Midway and O'Hare international airports said. "These measures are not as stringent as what we saw with the ... Gulf war, which

Syrian, Egyptian

(Continued from page 12)

Israeli Foreign Minister Shimon Peres urged Syria and Lebanon Monday to quit their footdragging and make peace in the Middle East a reality. Mr. Peres told the U.N. General Assembly that the two countries had "to stop hesitating, to stop wondering. They have to... come in and follow up." He singled out President Assad, who, he said, was "making security the major agenda" and for limiting talks to military issues. "Experience has shown that through a negotiation on all levels, embracing all issues, without timidity, without fatigue, we can achieve peace," Mr. Peres said.

Sudan: No early thaw in U.S. ties

(Continued from page 12)

Baghdad in the 1990-91 Gulf crisis. Gen. Bashir said he had not supported Iraq in the war, but had only objected to the massive build-up of Western-led forces in the region that preceded the 1991 conflict. Qatar and Sudan have agreed to launch a joint oil company to pump 5,000 barrels a day from fields 600 kilometres south of Khartoum on the White Nile, east of the southern township of Melut. The first phase of the venture is expected to cost about \$12 million. Later plans call for an additional \$30 million. Gen. Bashir said his government would press ahead with its "Islamic agenda" and

N-test ignites condemnation

(Continued from page 12)

continue to apply Islamic law "whatever the pressure and political and economic threats." The U.S. State Department has had Sudan on its list of countries promoting terrorism for the past two years, while neighbouring Egypt accused Khartoum of being behind a failed attempt to kill President Hosni Mubarak in Ethiopia in June. Gen. Bashir also blamed violent street protests which rocked Khartoum last month on communists, and said all students arrested after the riots had been released. The Sudanese president arrived in Qatar Sunday on his way back from a tour of China and Vietnam.

Children asked to vote for Saddam

(Continued from page 12)

onto the roof of the French ambassador's residence in London to protest over the test. "It is for the French to justify these nuclear tests, but what we must do is keep our eye on the main strategic objective which is the comprehensive test ban treaty which will permanently ban all nuclear tests," British Foreign Secretary Malcolm Rifkind said. In a television interview, New Zealand's Bolger turned up the heat on Britain, which faces diplomatic isolation at a Commonwealth heads of government meeting summit in New Zealand in November. Britain's refusal to condemn France is expected to be a key subject of discussion at the meeting.

Children asked to vote for Saddam

(Continued from page 12)

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Kristian Karembeu (L) of Sampdoria fights for the ball with Marco Sanna of Cagliari during their match October 1. Cagliari won the match over Sampdoria 2-1 (Reuters photo)

AC Milan and Bayern big guns are spiked

EUROPEAN SOCCER

PARIS (AFP) — AC Milan, Bayern Munich and Paris Saint Germain all tasted bitter defeat at the weekend.

The Italian superclub lost its unbeaten Serie A record, as did the Bavarians in the Bundesliga, while the Parisians saw their command of the French scene overturned.

That left Dutch side Ajax and Spanish pace-setters Espanol as the only clubs left with a 100 per cent winning record this campaign.

Milan, so impressive in Europe but deprived of the resting Dejan Savicevic on Sunday, crashed to a shock 1-0 defeat at Bari.

Carmine Gautieri's goal allowed Juventus and Napoli, who drew 1-1, to edge within a point of the Serie A leader.

Bayern, meanwhile, dis-

covered that seven wins in a row counted for nothing at reigning champions Borussia Dortmund.

Stefan Reuter scored at the ideal time, just before the break, to put the home side ahead and although Christian Nerlinger hit back immediately after the pause Sosa and Michael Zorc conjured up two goals inside three minutes to earn the points.

The result left the Bavarians on 21 points, while Borussia moved up to 17.

The Parisians, unlike Milan and Bayern, had been beaten once before this season but had to concede the head of the table to Metz after a 3-1 Sunday defeat at Lens in front of a 35,000 crowd.

Metz had woo by the same

scoreline on Saturday against Auxerre, giving them 25 points to PSG's 23. Lens' win saw them move up to third on 22.

Those disasters had little effect on European champions Ajax, all but untouchable at the moment both at home and on the continent.

They strengthened their hold on the Dutch league with a 4-0 away drubbing of SC Heerenveen, their seventh win in a row.

Jari Litmanen, who scored a hat-trick in the European Champions League in midweek, and Patrick Kluijvert were again their main executioners, each scoring a goal in a game that took the unbeaten Amsterdam club to 21 points, PSV Eindhoven, however, kept in touch with

a 3-0 defeat of Feyenoord. Brazilian Ronaldo on the scoresheet again just as he was last week.

In Spain, Espanol claimed a fifth win in a row, doing just enough against bottom club Racing Santander to earn a 1-0 home win and stay top on 15 points.

But that performance — and the match between champions Real Madrid and former champions

Barcelona — was upstaged by Brazilian striker Bebeto. He served up the individual performance of the weekend by cracking all five goals in Deportivo la Coruna's 5-0 win over Albacete — with four in the last six minutes.

Bebeto had opened his account after just two minutes of the match but it was not until the 84th that he

seemed to have put the game out of Albacete's reach. His next three goals followed in the 85th, 87th and 89th minutes, giving him eight goals for the season after just five games.

Real Madrid and Barcelona, who played the second half with 10 men after defender Sergi was sent off for a second booking, ended the game with a 1-1 stalemate.

Real will have been the unhappier side, after dominating most of the match. Dane Michael Laudrup set up his side's goal after just 12 minutes for the 18-year-old Raul to score. Barcelona's inspirational Bosnian striker Meho Kodro, however, matched him before half-time to set up Roger for the equaliser.

IOC, hockey's world ruling body give in to NHL conditions for Olympics

STOCKHOLM (AFP) — The International Olympic Committee and hockey's international ruling body gave in to all of the National Hockey League's (NHL) demands in order to have NHL players at the 1998 winter Olympics, the Swedish daily Svenska Dagbladet said Monday.

The newspaper, which acquired an advance copy of the agreement to be announced Monday night in New York, said the NHL dictated its conditions to the International Ice Hockey Federation (IIHF) and the IOC.

"It is possible that there will be some reactions from other federations within the Olympic organisation. But this is the deal we had to

give in in order to get all the NHL players," the president of the Swedish Ice Hockey Federation, Rickard Fagerlund, told the paper.

The NHL board of governors announced Sept. 29 that it would shut down the 1997-98 season for 16 days so league players might compete in Nagano, but the details of the deal were not announced.

According to Svenska Dagbladet, the main points of the deal are:

— The NHL decides the game schedule for Nagano. Players will arrive in Nagano Feb. 9 1998, with three training days before the first game is played Feb. 13. No game will be played Feb. 17, and the finals will be played Feb. 22.

— National team coaches must consult with either an NHL general manager, a current or former NHL coach, or a current or former NHL player before making team selections. At least 12 players must be named to the team before Aug. 1 1997, and the remaining players by Dec. 1, 1997. Selected players must not be used in national squad training games.

— The IIHF will pay insurance costs for all NHL players in Nagano.

— The IIHF will pay for all NHL players to fly first-class to Nagano, plus board and lodgings for one guest per NHL player.

Some ticket-holders will skip Atlanta

ATLANTA, Georgia (AFP) — Many people who received only a handful of the 1996 Olympic tickets they sought have decided they would rather skip the centennial games altogether than pay for a trip and see relatively little.

"We should have been associated with a big corporate sponsor. Then we would have been all right," lamented Chicago's Miles Zaremski.

He ordered more than one thousand dollars worth of seats, received tickets only for baseball and said he would give away the seats rather than spend more money on travel after the seating disappointment.

The story is common for those among the 300,000 ticket applicants who discovered in the past week they were getting little or none of the big-ticket seats they had sought.

Adding to the frustration was a 15-dollar non-

refundable application fee with every order.

"If somebody got tickets to horseshoes they got more than I did," said Georgia resident Brad Oliver, comparing the sports to a popular U.S. leisure game.

"Now I'm not going anywhere. And I probably won't even watch it on television."

Mike Swick went for wrestling, handball and second-level events figuring the basketball, swimming, athletics and gymnastics seats would be near impossible. So was what they wanted. They would up with baseball, volleyball and paddling.

Now they may stay home. "I would like to experience the Olympics and see Atlanta but I don't know if I am going to make the expense to see what I don't really want to see."

Among the ticket failures

were the parents of 1992 Olympic gold medal winner Summer Sanders. They lost in the lottery process for swimming seats.

"It's embarrassing as a parent having to approach people asking for tickets. You feel like an absolute idiot," said Bob Sanders, father of the champion.

Olympic organisers ticket chairman Scott Anderson said 93 per cent of the 2,400 people who have sent back second-chance ticket forms for available events have bought more seats while only seven per cent have sought refunds.

"We have disappointed some people, but I don't think we have lost any," Anderson said. "The Olympic spirit is going to shine through."

Injured Baggio out of Italian squad

ROME (R) — World Cup striker Roberto Baggio, suffering with a muscle injury, was left out of the Italian squad named Monday for next Sunday's important European championship qualifier against Group Four leaders Croatia.

Coach Arrigo Sacchi named an 18-man squad that yielded no surprises for the match in Split, where Italy will be seeking to avenge a 2-1 home defeat to Croatia last November.

That was the last time Baggio played for his country.

He was consigned to the substitute's bench during Italy's 1-0 win against Slovenia last month and was absent from the new selection after pulling a muscle in his left leg Sunday during league leaders AC Milan's shock 1-0 defeat at Bari.

Lazio striker Giuseppe

Signori, who is also injured, and team mate Pier Luigi Casiraghi's suspension further limited Sacchi's choices up front.

He opted again for Juventus striker Fabrizio Ravanelli, the scorer against Slovenia, and Gianfranco Zola of Parma and brought Milan's Marco Simone back into the squad.

Squad:

Goalkeepers — Angelo Peruzzi, Luca Bucci.

Defenders — Antonio Benarrivo, Cirio Ferrara, Luigi Apolloni, Paolo Maldini, Amedeo Carboni, Alessandro Costacurta.

Midfielders — Roberto di Matteo, Demetrio Albertini, Dario Baggio, Francesco Statuto, Angelo di Livio, Massimo Crippa, Alessandro

Forwards — Gianfranco Zola, Marco Simone, Fabrizio Ravanelli

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Jordan Electricity Authority declares the issue of Tender No. 128 / 95 for Telecommunication Systems for Jordan - Egypt Interconnection. The tender includes the following equipment: power line carrier (PLC), teleprotection, private automatic exchanges, battery chargers, hot line telephone consoles and communication management system, on turn key basis. This tender will be financed through a loan obtained by each of Arab Republic of Egypt and the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan from the Arab Fund for Economic and Social Development. Contractors who are interested to participate in this tender can obtain the tender documents from the Procurement Dept. at JEA main building located at Swafia, Zahran Street against a non-refundable amount of \$250 for one volume. Bids are to be submitted to the secretary of tendering committee at the above address for both of the technical and financial offers accompanied by a bid bond equal to 2 per cent of the total value of the bid. Submission of bids should be no later than 10 O'clock in the morning, Amman time on Monday, December 4th, 1995, and shall be opened publicly at 12 O'clock noon on the said date. The bids should be valid for 150 days from the closing date. Tenderers are requested to submit any questions in writing or by cable to reach the Jordan Electricity Authority not later than two weeks before the closing date. Response shall be addressed to the specified tenderer's address.

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Alahia-Abela Grand draw winners
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The other 15 prizes are as follows:
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3rd prize: Inter-Sat satellite (KU-BAND) 150 cm.
4th prize: Microwave National (NN7853).
5th prize: Inter-Sat satellite (KU-BAND) 120 cm.
6th prize: Automatic washing machine National (NA950XLP).
7th prize: Video Panasonic - multi system + remote control.
8th prize: Stereo Panasonic - compact.
Prizes from 9 to 13: 20 inch colour TV - multi system + remote control.
14th prize: Vacuum cleaner National (MC 8028).
15th prize: Gift voucher - Leather Shop - value JD 150
16th prize: Return ticket to Beirut by MEA

Rodman set for Jordan link-up

CHICAGO, Illinois (AFP) — Michael Jordan's next new teammate on the Chicago Bulls could be Dennis Rodman, the

unorthodox and controversial forward who led the National Basketball Association (NBA) in rebounds the past four seasons.

Jerry Reinsdorf, the club's chairman, said he has been in discussion with San Antonio about a deal for Rodman, who is

scheduled to make \$2.5 million this coming season in the final year of his contract.

The Bulls lost in the second round of last season's playoffs to Orlando, which was sparked by ex-Bull Horace Grant in addition to Shaquille O'Neal and Anfernee Hardaway. Chicago lost their top rebounder when Grant departed to the Magic as a free agent and was unable to

regain the form which brought three championships.

Even Jordan's return could not recapture that peak. While he matched well with Scottie Pippen and Toni Kukoc, the rebounding void

once filled by Grant weakened the Bulls and showed in the playoffs.

Rodman is known more for dyiing his hair purple, orange and green and missing practices and games than his rebounding skill.

GOREN BRIDGE

WITH OMAR SHARIF & TAMAR HIRSCH

CHICAGO Tribune Media Services, Inc.

ANSWERS TO WEEKLY BRIDGE QUIZ

Q. 1 - Both vulnerable, as South you hold:

482 07 06103783 44J92

Partner opens the bidding with one heart. What do you respond?

A - If you count the singleton in partner's suit as two points and elect to bid two diamonds, don't be surprised if the bidding gets out of hand very quickly. You have neither the suit quality nor the strength for a two-over-one response, so bid one no trump.

Q. 2 - Neither vulnerable, as South you hold:

AK 072 0A 104 0K Q83 4J5

The bidding has proceeded: NORTH EAST SOUTH WEST

1 2 Pass 1 0 Pass

2 2 Pass 1 0 Pass

What do you bid now?

A - Since partner's club reid denies a four-card major, there's no point in introducing your spade suit. However, don't make the mistake of bidding two no trump. That shows 11-12 points and invites partner to raise only with a better than minimum opening. Bid three no trump.

Q. 3 - Both vulnerable, as South you hold:

AK 072 0A 104 0K Q83 4J5

The bidding has proceeded: NORTH EAST SOUTH WEST

1 2 Pass 1 0 Pass

2 2 Pass 1 0 Pass

What do you bid now?

A - Had there been no enemy overcall, the best you could do would have been to issue a game invitation by raising to two no trump. West's intervention rebid North of the responsibility to rebid with a minimum balanced hand, so partner's voluntary action must show a holding that has improved on the auction. Raise to three no trump.

Q. 4 - As South, vulnerable, you hold:

AK 072 0A 104 0K Q83 4J5

Partner opens the bidding one no trump. What do you respond?

A - If you have a mechanism for finding out whether partner has a high diamond honor, by all means use it. If you do not, simply jump to three no trump. Your diamond suit rates to produce five or six tricks, and that should give partner an excellent shot at game.

Q. 5 - As South, vulnerable, you hold:

AK 072 0A 104 0K Q83 4J5

Partner opens the bidding one no trump. What do you respond?

A - If you have a mechanism for finding out whether partner has a high diamond honor, by all means use it. If you do not, simply jump to three no trump. Your diamond suit rates to produce five or six tricks, and that should give partner an excellent shot at game.

Q. 6 - As South, vulnerable, you hold:

AK 072 0A 104 0K Q83 4J5

Partner opens the bidding one no trump. What do you respond?

A - If you have a mechanism for finding out whether partner has a high diamond honor, by all means use it. If you do not, simply jump to three no trump. Your diamond suit rates to produce five or six tricks, and that should give partner an excellent shot at game.

Q. 7 - As South, vulnerable, you hold:

AK 072 0A 104 0K Q83 4J5

Partner opens the bidding one no trump. What do you respond?

A - If you have a mechanism for finding out whether partner has a high diamond honor, by all means use it. If you do not, simply jump to three no trump. Your diamond suit rates to produce five or six tricks, and that should give partner an excellent shot at game.

Q. 8 - As South, vulnerable, you hold:

AK 072 0A 104 0K Q83 4J5

Partner opens the bidding one no trump. What do you respond?

A - If you have a mechanism for finding out whether partner has a high diamond honor, by all means use it. If you do not, simply jump to three no trump. Your diamond suit rates to produce five or six tricks, and that should give partner an excellent shot at game.

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CINEMA TEL: 699238
PLAZA
Sandra Bullock
& Bill Pullman
in
While You Were Sleeping
Shows: 12:30, 3:30, 5:00, 6:30, 8:30, 10:30

CINEMA TEL: 677420
CONCORD
CONCORD "1"
Adel Imam & Yusra
Birds of the Darkness
(Arabic)
Shows: 12:30, 3:30, 6, 8:15, 10:45
CONCORD "2"
POLICE ACADEMY
"MISSION TO MOSCOW"
Shows: 4, 6, 8, 10

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U.N. agencies appeal for assistance to Iraq

BAGHDAD (R) — U.N. agencies that have been predicting a humanitarian catastrophe in Iraq will try on Tuesday to persuade foreign donors to substantially increase their recent levels of help.

The agencies are alarmed that more than halfway through the current fiscal year they have received only about a quarter of the \$183 million they expected — and they had requested less than in previous years.

"Donors have so many other places to put their aid," said Viktor Wahlroos, deputy coordinator in Baghdad of U.N. agencies such as the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and the World Food Programme (WFP) that aid Iraq. "Iraq is forgotten."

The aid groups have prepared the ground for the one-day meeting in Geneva by a series of dramatic warnings portraying Iraq as hovering on the edge of disaster five years after all its trade was banned over its 1990 invasion of Kuwait.

"Living conditions remain precarious for at least an estimated 4 million people," Mr. Wahlroos told Reuters. That is 20 per cent of the population and includes 2.6 million children under the age of five and 600,000 pregnant or nursing mothers.

While health statistics show the rate of deterioration has slowed since jumps in the first two years of sanctions, U.N. officials are convinced a drastic change for the worse is about to appear.

Iraqi President Saddam Hussein, facing sanctions until the U.N. Security Council believes he has fulfilled terms set after the 1991 Gulf war, slashed rations to his population exactly a year ago.

According to U.N. estimates, rations of items such as flour and sugar that previously met 70 per cent of basic needs of the population now provide less than half the necessary daily nutrition.

The rest must be purchased with Iraqi dinars, which have collapsed in value. A dollar that bought less than a third of a dinar in 1990 now buys well over 2000 dinars on the street. A professor's monthly salary of about 6,000 dinars would buy a single breakfast at the government's shoppiece Al Rasheed hotel.

Despite that, U.N. officials know it will not be easy to secure extra funds in Geneva. Subhash Das Gupta, head of UNICEF in Iraq, said the most likely outcome was some pledges of future assistance, some countries deferring any action and, hopefully, a few firm commitments.

"There is donor fatigue," said Mr. Das Gupta.

Iraq's economic links to the rest of the world have been cut off for five years and there is no end in sight to the total ban on Iraqi exports and the ban on all imports except food and medicine.

Meanwhile, other international concerns — from refugee problems in Africa to the desire to shore up Palestinian self-rule — are claiming the attention and funds of donor nations.

Donors may also have to be persuaded that increasing aid is the solution. Some earlier predictions of disaster did not come true and Iraq also has permission to sell a limited amount of oil — under U.N. terms that have so far been rejected — to pay for food imports.

That is a reminder of the United Nations' unusual dual role in Iraq. It enforces sanctions, imposed to ensure the elimination of Iraq's weapons of mass destruction. Rolf Ekeus, the U.N. official implementing the arms control programme, left Baghdad on Sunday after his latest round of talks saying that problems remained.

But in the same building in Baghdad that houses the U.N. arms experts, the aid agencies are appealing for funds to combat the hardships caused by the sanctions.

Regent urges coordination, linkage in education among Arab countries

AMMAN (J.T.) — His Royal Highness Crown Prince Hassan, the Regent, on Monday called for inter-Arab dialogue to upgrade the education in the Arab World.

Addressing the opening session of a pan-Arab educational conference at the University of Jordan, Prince Hassan stressed that the educational development and reform in Jordan should be linked with the development of human resources and the development of land's resources.

In his address to the conference entitled "Preparing Arab Teachers for the 21st Century," Prince Hassan called on the Arab World to coordinate and link educational programmes.

Urging educationists to interact with the changes taking place in the region, he said: "Development of the

(Continued on page 3)



His Royal Highness Crown Prince Hassan, the Regent, on Monday attends a conference on education and teachers in the Arab World (photo by Boghos)

French N-test ignites renewed world condemnation, but Paris is unruffled

Combined agency dispatches

FRANCE WAS again the target of a wave of global outrage of Monday after it ignored world opinion and exploded the second and possibly biggest of its new series of nuclear weapons tests in the South Pacific.

The fiercest condemnation came from Pacific-rim nations Japan, Australia and New Zealand, while the United States, another nuclear power, also criticised the test, calling it regrettable.

European Union (EU) foreign ministers also voiced their disappointment, but were at a loss about what to do next.

The French government was unruffled. Prime Minister Alain Juppe would only repeat that the tests were harmless to the environment and would be the last before France signed a global nuclear weapons test ban.

"We are continuing our testing campaign in the conditions and within the limits set by the president of the republic," he said in terse comments to reporters.

Gaullist Deputy Jacques Baumel, who is vice-president of the National Assembly's defence committee, said France would hold the third nuclear test in early

November. Mr. Baumel, who was speaking in the National Assembly lobby, said he had no official information, but that the French programme provided for a test per month and "I think that early in November, there will be a third test."

Mr. Baumel said he was "no prophet" and was "not party to defence secrets," but affirmed that the 110-kilotonne test carried out on Fangataufa atoll Sunday was "aimed at validating for the last time" the TN-75 warhead which will be installed on France's new generation of strategic nuclear submarines from next summer.

The deputy had predicted on Sept. 22 that the second test would be staged in Fangataufa "in eight to ten days" to test the TN-75 nuclear warhead.

Mr. Baumel repeated that the test series had three aims — verifying the reliability of existing weapons, testing the TN-75 and preparing laboratory simulation of tests.

Earlier, Mr. Baumel accused unidentified groups from the United States, Australia and New Zealand of funding the environmental group Greenpeace to pressure France.

He said such groups were exploiting sincere Green-

peace activists for commercial and political purposes. "Greenpeace is an extraordinary mix of well-meaning people: old protestant women, cool young things, very friendly young people," he told the France-Inter radio station.

"But at the same time behind this there are people who are pursuing a determined policy with considerable means... and who gives these means?" he said.

The French defence ministry said the blast was detonated beneath Fangataufa in French Polynesia at 12:30 a.m. Paris time (2330 GMT on Sunday).

The blast was some five times more powerful than the U.S. atomic bomb dropped on Japan's Hiroshima in 1945.

"The United States regrets this action. We continue to urge all of the nuclear powers including France to refrain from future tests and to join in a global moratorium (on testing)," White House spokesman Mike McCurry said in a statement.

But Paris was not the lone target for criticism, with both Australia and New Zealand also hitting out at Britain for refusing to speak out against French testing.

It was the second in a series of six to eight tests breaking

France's three-year-old moratorium on nuclear tests. The first, a far smaller blast at France's main Mururoa atoll test site, also unleashed a tide of world condemnation and sparked violent riots in Tahiti.

Tahiti was calm but tense in the aftermath of the latest test. But pro-independence groups warned that it could ignite a violent rampage aimed at French expatriates. More than 800 gendarmes have been deployed in Papeete to quell any repeat of rioting that followed the first blast.

Japan, Australia and New Zealand all summoned French ambassadors on Monday to voice opposition to the testing.

Japan's Foreign Minister Yohei Kono told Ambassador Jean-Bernard Ouvrier he "strongly regretted that you do not understand Japan's consistent position on this matter," and demanded France halt the testing.

New Zealand Prime Minister Jim Bolger, in a statement, said: "New Zealanders are outraged that once again France is thumbing its nose at world opinion."

Swedish Foreign Minister Lena Hjelm-Wallen said she had hoped that the reaction

(Continued on page 7)

Rabin remains defiant against critical Jewry

TEL AVIV (Agencies) — Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin said on Sunday American Jews opposed to Middle East peace moves should stop interfering in his government's policies.

Mr. Rabin spoke to reporters on the way home from the United States where he signed an accord with the Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO) at a White House ceremony of expanding Palestinian self-rule in the West Bank.

"Those who don't send their daughters and sons to the army (in Israel)... have no moral right to take action against the policy of a democratically-elected government," Mr. Rabin told reporters on his plane as it was about to land at Tel Aviv airport.

He said some American Jewish in "fringe groups" had been active in the U.S. Congress to undermine the accord, in which Israel agreed to pull its troops out of Palestinian population centres in the West Bank to allow for Palestinian elections.

Mr. Rabin's opponents in Israel and the U.S. are against ceding any part of the West Bank.

Mr. Rabin renewed his attack in remarks broadcast Monday U.S. Jews had "no moral right" to lobby in Washington against the peace agreements.

"This is unprecedented and sets of a warning signal in terms of our relations with U.S. Jewry in the future," Mr. Rabin came under attack over the weekend

when he was critical in a meeting with Jewish leaders in New York City on Friday.

Mr. Rabin complained then that donations from American Jews were dwindling. He also denounced as "loathsome" a Jewish group that urged Congress not to grant U.S. aid to the cash-strapped Palestinian self-rule government.

Avraham Burg, a leading figure in Mr. Rabin's Labour Party, said the prime minister had made a "mistake of historic proportions" with his attack on American Jews. Mr. Burg heads the quasi-governmental Jewish Agency, which works to bring Jewish immigrants to Israel and has close ties with diaspora Jews.

Rabbi Shlomo Riskin, a Jewish settler leader who immigrated from the United States 13 years ago, said the government was acting in an undemocratic manner.

He noted that parliament would only get a chance to vote on the autonomy accord on Thursday, a week after it was signed.

"You cannot ask American Jewry to give money and not give their opinions about the most basic things," Mr. Riskin said.

Earlier this year Mr. Rabin likened some U.S. rabbis to "ayatollahs" after they joined a call on soldiers to refuse orders to evacuate army bases in the West Bank.

Israeli men do a compulsory three years of army service beginning at age 18. Women are drafted for two years.

Assad, Mubarak to meet on peace

CAIRO (Agencies) — The presidents of Syria and Egypt are to meet soon to explore ways of getting Syrian-Israeli peace talks moving again. Egyptian Information Minister Safwat Al Sherif said Monday.

Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak told U.S. officials in Washington that it was now "important to unblock Israeli-Syrian negotiations" after attending the signing of an Israel-Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO) autonomy deal at the White House last Thursday, Mr. Sherif said.

"He will soon meet (Syrian President) Hafez Al Assad to carry out consultations on this subject," Mr. Sherif told the government daily Al Ahrar Al Massal, without saying where the meeting would take place.

PLO Chairman Yasser Arafat, meanwhile, said there would be a meeting "soon" between Israel and Syria without giving a date.

Mr. Arafat, speaking during a visit to Senegal on Sunday, also said he hoped for progress in Israeli-Syrian and Israeli-Lebanese negotiations leading to a "concrete accord and a just and lasting peace throughout the region."

U.S. President Bill Clinton "assured me he is going to do everything to ensure Israel negotiates with Syria and Lebanon," Mr. Arafat said.

U.S. Secretary of State Warren Christopher is expected to meet this week in Washington with Syrian Foreign Minister Farouk Al Sharrar to discuss ways of breaking the deadlock in Israeli-Syrian talks.

After years of stop-start negotiations with U.S. envoys acting as go-betweens, the talks ground to a halt in June with both sides failing to agree on security arrangements to accompany an Israeli withdrawal on the Golan Heights.

Syrian Defence Minister Mustafa Tlas has said Syria was still committed to peace in the region but wanted the return of all of the Golan Heights before it could make peace with Israel.

Official sources said General Tlas, attending the opening of a military course on Sunday, denounced the PLO-Israeli deal signed last week in Washington for Palestinian self-rule in the West Bank as a "capitulation."

"Tlas assured Syria was committed to the comprehensive and just peace... and that Syria can not accept a peace that would not return the lands and rights," one source said.

"Syria will not abandon a span of its home land," one source quoted Gen. Tlas as saying.

Qatar has been mediating in Sudan's efforts to mend ties with the rest of the oil-rich Gulf Arab states. Those relations have been strained ever since Sudan sympathised with

(Continued on page 7)

(Continued on page 7)

Sudan: No early thaw in relations with U.S.

DOHA (Agencies) — The president of Sudan, a country listed by the United States as alleged sponsor of terrorism, said Monday that an early thaw in Khartoum's relations with Washington appears unlikely.

"Our relations with Washington are tense and the Americans are responsible for this," President Omar Hassan Al Bashir told reporters before wrapping up a two-day visit here.

"We don't expect an improvement in relations in the immediate future," he said. Lieutenant-General Bashir blasted what he said were U.S. efforts to condemn Sudan at international forums, and for stopping all aid to his impoverished country.

He said the United States had threatened to fight Khartoum by heightening tensions between Sudan and neighbouring Ethiopia, Eritrea and Uganda.

Gen. Bashir said his government was spending about \$1 million a day in its war against rebels in southern Sudan.

He rejected Ethiopian accusations that Sudan had mobilised troops along the

border.

Saying there were more than one million Eritrean refugees living in Sudan, he said Khartoum would not evict them as a "refugee weapon" against Ethiopia or Eritrea.

Gen. Bashir also blamed Israel and the United States for the civil war.

Gen. Bashir, speaking to the Sudanese community in Qatar, said: "The enemies are trying to undermine Sudan by using the issue of the south."

"Some parties don't want to see peace secured," he added, naming the United States, Israel, Britain and other external and internal forces.

"We are trying to resolve this question by two means, one political and the other military," Gen. Bashir said. Government forces have succeeded in restricting the rebellion to small pockets in the south, he said.

Qatar has been mediating in Sudan's efforts to mend ties with the rest of the oil-rich Gulf Arab states. Those relations have been strained ever since Sudan sympathised with

American airports on high security alert after guilty verdict in bombing plot trial

WASHINGTON (AP) — Airports nationwide are stepping up precautions against attacks to the highest level since the 1991 Gulf war. No specific threats were cited, but a Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) official said Monday: "We're planning for the worst."

Transportation Secretary Federico Pena issued the order Sunday after a group of militants were convicted in a New York trial. "Based on several current and future events, more security measures are now warranted," Mr. Pena said.

Security was noticeably tighter at the White House. Pedestrians were blocked from Pennsylvania Avenue, which already this year was closed to motor vehicles for security.

"We always review the security environment both for U.S. installations abroad and U.S. government facilities here at home when the environment suggests it's smart to do that," a presidential spokesman Mike McCurry said.

He said last week's signing of a Middle East peace agreement at the White House, the New York verdict and other events "legitimately cause the United States to look at the status of its security."

Stepped-up security was evident at Dulles International Airport outside Washington. Travellers on a New York-bound flight had to produce picture identification when checking bags at the curb and again when picking up seat assignments.

They also were asked at both locations whether others had handled their baggage and if they had packed it themselves.

At Newark International Airport in New Jersey, where Pope John Paul II arrives Wednesday for a five-day

U.S. visit, no changes in security were visible Monday, but security has been at a heightened state since Aug. 13. That alert was based on a federal warning that radicals might be planning a car bombing at nearby John F. Kennedy International Airport in New York.

On Aug. 9, Mr. Pena ordered a "heightened state of alert" for transportation facilities nationwide after President Bill Clinton requested a review of airport security procedures.

At the time, the administration refused to reveal details of any threats. But the newspaper Newsday reported the FBI had intelligence reports that two groups — the Palestinian Hamas and the Iran-backed Hizbollah — were planning a "suicide massacre."

James Kallstrom, chief of the FBI's New York office, said Monday the current

security measures were aimed at no specific threat. He said the FBI and the State Department "have threats all the time, hundreds of phone calls, letters."

Mr. Kallstrom said on television that he did not know whether an attack is likely but added: "We're planning for the worst."

He said he "absolutely" expects threats to security to increase but noted that due to increased security measures including more careful ID and baggage checks, "This might be the safest time" to travel.

At Dulles and Washington's other main airport, National, the new measures meant cars left curbside at the terminal might be towed and check-in lines might move more slowly, a spokeswoman said.

"We don't expect too

(Continued on page 7)

No serious backlash expected in Egypt

CAIRO (AP) — Despite his following among Islamic militants, the conviction of Sheikh Omar Abdul Rahman will have few repercussions in Egypt, Muslim activists said.

But one of his attorneys in Cairo condemned the verdict, calling it a "political trial for political thought."

"Omar Abdul Rahman had no hand in any of these attacks, neither in organising them or executing them," said Abdul Halim Mandour, who has known the Egyptian cleric since 1979. "He is not a terrorist. He is a thinker and a man of religion."

Mr. Mandour predicted there would be anger, but other Muslim activists discounted the chance for violence. Militants of Al Gamaa Al Islamiya, or the Islamic Group, many of whom con-

sider Sheikh Abdul Rahman their spiritual leader, have carried out bit-and-run attacks since 1992 in an attempt to topple the government.

"He has followers, he has supporters, but I don't think it will cause commotion," said Mamoun Al Hodeibi, a spokesman for the Muslim Brotherhood, Egypt's largest Islamic group.

The Brotherhood claims tens of thousands of followers in Egypt but has disavowed violence. The government has cracked down on it since January, accusing it of having ties with the Islamic Group.

Other supporters of Abdul Rahman said they did not expect a backlash, particularly since the government has largely confined the insurgen-

cy to the group's traditional stronghold in the south.

"There will be nothing. The circumstances won't allow it," said Montassir Al Zayat, another attorney for Sheikh Abdul Rahman.

Security appeared normal at the sprawling U.S. embassy in downtown Cairo. A handful of guards standing along the embassy's walls said they had not heard of the conviction. Three pickup trucks carrying about 10 soldiers with rifles were parked across the street, but they said they report there every night.

"I haven't heard anything about the trial," said one of the black-uniformed soldiers, who as is customary refused to give his name. "I've been listening to the soccer match on the radio."

The embassy issued a warning in July urging the thousands of Americans in Egypt to be careful as the trial approached a verdict. An embassy spokesman said Sunday that the embassy had received threats last month, but declined to give details.

He said no private U.S. citizens had been threatened.

The trial had received little attention in Egypt. State-owned radio and television virtually ignored the case, and the daily newspapers only rarely put the trial on their front pages.

The verdict Sunday received similar treatment, mentioned at the end of the evening news. Early editions of state-owned newspapers carried it briefly on the front page.

COLUMN

Norway royals cut down on smoking at the palace

OSLO (AFP) — Norway's King Harald V and Queen Sonja will no longer offer cigarettes at official receptions at the royal palace and at least one room will be smoke-free at official dinners, the palace has announced. The changes are being made to keep the palace up-to-date with Norwegian smoking laws, royal reception secretary Magne Hagen said. King Harald V is a smoker.

U.S. singers raise money for poor farmers

LOUISVILLE, Kentucky (R) — Some of America's top musicians joined forces Sunday in a concert to raise money for struggling, small family farmers. Concert organisers said about 50,000 people crammed into Cardinal Stadium in Louisville to see a line-up of stars including rockers Neil Young and John Mellencamp and the band Hootie and the Blowfish. Country singer Willie Nelson, president of Farm Aid, said the farming crisis of the 1980's was still alive 10 years later in America.

"This is not a celebration," Nelson told a news conference before the concert, which raised more than \$1 million in ticket sales. "This is a black eye on America that we had to do Farm Aid once. We're not here to celebrate, we're here to tell you there's a problem. Not only is it still here, it's worse than it was," he added. Nelson estimated about 500 family farmers went out of business every week, adding that Farm Aid had distributed more than \$12 million to farming organisations across America. Farm Aid began in 1985 when Nelson and rockers Young and Mellencamp held their first concert. Young urged President Bill Clinton to veto efforts by Congress to cut support to family farmers.

"Help needs to go to people who care about the land and who don't want to destroy the land by overworking it — not to people pushing pencils in New York City," Young said.

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